the weekly Standard

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THE CHINA SYNDROME
DAVID BROOKS • DAVID TELL
ROBERT KAGAN & WILLIAM KRISTOL

The New Army

Be whatever you want to be

BY MATT LABASH

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the weekly Standard

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The Bancroft Misfire

Michael Bellesiles, a professor of history at Emory University, is the author of *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*. He recently wrote in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that after this anti-gun history of guns in America was published, right-wing wackos on the Internet attacked him as a "tool of the liberals," and a "paid agent of the Zionist Occupying Government." But Bellesiles wasn't discouraged. "Ultimately, we all have a duty to speak the truth and hope for the best," he wrote.

And the best he got. Well-known scholars wrote drooling blurbs for his book. Garry Wills penned an arrestingly credulous review that was featured on the cover of the *New York Times Book Review*. And last week, *Arming America* received the distinguished Bancroft Prize from Columbia University.

Only one problem: His critics aren't just Internet wackos. A host of scholars credibly accuse Bellesiles of misreporting the public records that are at the heart of the book. They say he ignored numerous and well-known firsthand accounts that contradict his argument that colonial America was relatively gun-free. Even worse (in THE SCRAPBOOK's view), the book is badly written. Apparently, though, if you're creating a usable history for Handgun Control, none of these flaws disqualifies you from receiving one of the premier awards for American history writing.

Bellesiles's main claim is that probate records and other sources show the number of colonial and antebellum Americans who owned guns was significantly lower than previously believed; that only some Americans were allowed to own guns; and that most Americans didn't want them. Thus, the popular image of early Americans as being familiar and comfortable with guns becomes a put-up job by the gun industry. And thus, instead of being cast as enemies of the Second Amendment, gun-controllers become restorers of an Edenic early America.

Nice try. James Lindgren, a professor of law at Northwestern University, and his student Justin Lee Heather have compiled a devastating refutation of Bellesiles's evidence. Take the period 1765-1790, when Bellesiles claims only some 14.7 percent of American men owned guns. Using one national database, Bellesiles and Heather find that about 54 percent of estates for the year 1774 list guns.

Lindgren and Heather have also attempted to replicate Bellesiles's findings for probate records in Providence for the years 1679-1729. They discovered major reporting errors on the condition of guns, who owned the guns, and even mistakes on such elementary questions as whether a gun owner was male or female. Serious questions have also been raised about Bellesiles's numbers for Massachusetts, Virginia, and other states.

It is heartening to see that a number of academics, some of distinctly liberal leanings, have joined the call for Bellesiles to produce his documentation for the numbers in his book. Alas, the Bancroft winner has alternately insisted that his records were accidentally destroyed and that they're in storage and haven't been organized for publication.

Until he better documents his research, the Bancroft Prize has been devalued—for no better reason, apparently, than to score cheap points in the debate over gun control. And it's not as if the debate over the book was a secret. Lindgren's rechecking of the probate records, for instance, made up part of Joyce Lee Malcolm's devastating review of the Bellesiles work in the January issue of *Reason*. It's true that a few Internet wackos have gone after Bellesiles, but they turn out to be better friends of historical integrity than the trustees of Columbia University. ♦

The *New York Times* Fesses Up

THE SCRAPBOOK's colleague Fred Barnes has famously noted that the most depressing four words you can read in a newspaper story are "First in a series." By this measure, American newspaper readers will soon be reaching for their Prozac. Last week, the *New York Times* won a Pulitzer for its notoriously tedious 15-part series on race. The series was obvious Pulitzer bait, but no matter; it still won. Given the combined prestige of the *Times* and the Pulitzer, this means a plague of copycats. When they aren't attending professional seminars on the mysterious declining readership of the daily paper, editors are no doubt already hard at work on their 23-part sermons on global warming, 18-part examinations of the juvenile justice system, and 17-part exposés of groundwater contamination that they hope will charm next year's Pulitzer jury.

Meanwhile, *New York Times* managing editor Bill Keller must have been sleep-deprived from celebrating when the *Washington Post*'s Howard Kurtz called him last week for a story on the prize. Because Keller confessed a trade secret that close readers of the paper have always suspected: It's standard practice at the *Times* to steer their readers to the proper conclusion.

Keller told Kurtz that in the race

series, the paper decided not to have each piece "build up to a fourth or fifth paragraph where the writer stood back, cleared his throat and told you what to think. We trusted readers would draw their own conclusions and maybe disagree." Keller said that normally his reporters give readers "a little editorial elbow in the ribs."

Forget the multi-part tedium next year. Give Kurtz a Pulitzer for extracting this astonishing quotation. ♦

Aegis on the Hill

Lost in the media coverage of the Bush administration's internal deliberations about whether to sell Taiwan the Aegis combat system is the bipartisan support for the sale in Congress. On April 3, more than a hundred members of Congress—82 in the House and 20 in the Senate—signed a letter to the president recommending the sale go forward. Among those signing the House's letter: Republicans Henry Hyde, Christopher Cox, and Tom DeLay, and Democrats Nancy Pelosi, Barney Frank, and David Wu. The Senate letter was signed, among others, by Jesse Helms, Jon Kyl, Trent Lott, George Allen, Rick Santorum, and Robert Torricelli. Both missives made the telling point that the Pentagon's own review of Taiwan's defense needs concluded that the Aegis system was a priority. Folks in Washington are always clamoring for bipartisanship when it comes to foreign policy. Well, here's one case where it now exists. If the administration decides not to let the sale go forward, there will be one less excuse for its decision. ♦

Bipartisan Bush

Speaking of bipartisanship, George W. Bush last week signed a toxic chemical treaty. "A Republican administration will continue and complete the work of a Democratic administration," he said. "This is the way environmental policy should work." Could have fooled us. Is that really what all those Republicans were voting for last fall? ♦

Pat Robertson's Realpolitik

Close SCRAPBOOK readers should not have been surprised last week when Pat Robertson seemed to endorse coerced abortions in China. When last quoted on this page two years ago, the Christian Coalition leader was an early cheerleader for the Chinese government's Falun Gong crackdown. Never mind that the "anti-cult" crackdown sent lots of Robertson's fellow Pentecostals and other Christians into Chinese prisons.

Robertson quickly clarified his statement that the Chinese government was "doing what they have to do." "I regret," he said, "that my unrehearsed comments on 'Wolf Blitzer' were not spoken with sufficient clarity to communicate my lifelong opposition to voluntary and forced abortion as a means of population control."

That's reassuring. In the future we'll only pay attention to the comments Robertson rehearses. ♦

Casual

MR. EPSTEIN REGRETS . . .

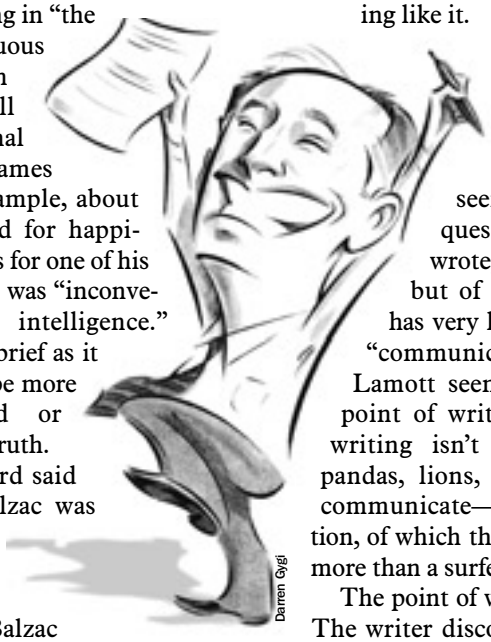
I have a small, slowly growing list of people who mustn't expect an invitation to lunch from me. Roger Clemens is on it; so, among others, are Donald Trump, Jack Valenti, Shirley MacLaine, Howell Raines, Jack Quinn, Barbara Walters, and Alan Dershowitz. Loaded with odious and silly opinions, their conversation would, I feel, seriously complicate my digestion.

I now add to this select list Anne Lamott, a writer whose name I first came across on the morning of March 29, 2001. A novelist and the author of a book called *Bird by Bird*, Miss Lamott is someone I encountered in two paragraphs toward the close of an article in the "Circuits" section of the *New York Times* by Bonnie Rothman Morris on the simultaneous spread of writing and loss of interest in elegant prose owing to the advent of quick composition via e-mail and chat-room conversations.

Miss Lamott recently wrote a column for *Salon*, and reported that the Internet had somehow loosened her up as a writer in a way she found most agreeable. "The Internet was much more playful for me," she said. "It was like an open mike at a bookstore, much less lofty, much less elitist. You don't take yourself very seriously." And then she went on to say—and here is the reason she is going to have to get lunch on her own—"The communication is the point, rather than the beauty of the sentence. I think beautifully crafted sentences are really overrated."

Reading that last sentence I won't say that, like a drowning man, I saw my entire life pass before me, but I did see roughly forty years of it swoosh by. Those would be the forty years that I have devoted to attempting to write those "beautifully crafted sentences" that Miss Lamott so jauntily disparages.

Already lunchless, Miss Lamott is also, I believe, clueless. In his novel *The Tragic Muse*, Henry James has a character of whom he writes: "Life, for him, was a purely practical function, not a question of phrasing." Pity the man isn't around to introduce to Miss Lamott; the two might show up one Sunday married in the *New York Times*'s "Vows" section. For Henry James himself, of course, phrasing was the name of the game, if not life itself then his best method for teasing out its meaning in "the dim and tortuous labyrinths" in which we all "sit in eternal darkness." James wrote, for example, about the likelihood for happiness being less for one of his heroines, who was "inconvenienced by intelligence." That phrase, brief as it is, could not be more fully packed or absorb more truth.



Jules Renard said that only Balzac was permitted to write badly. He meant that Balzac had so much to say, and literary ambitions so large, that he alone in French literature couldn't be expected to slow down for the niceties of style. The same, I suppose, might be said for Dostoyevsky, another writer in a powerful rush; in his case, the hurry was caused by the lash of serious gambling debt. Closer to our own day, Theodore Dreiser and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, two other big-subject writers, are thought, with some justification, poor stylists. Balzac, Dostoyevsky, Dreiser, Solzhenitsyn—if our literary ambitions are less than theirs, I'd say we'd better avail ourselves of as much craft as each of our sentences can bear, because, darlings, we're going to need it.

A poet achieves greatness if he can write six or seven poems that perfectly click. Click is the precise word; when I read a great poem, I hear in my mind a clicking sound, as of tiles sliding together and fitting exactly, exquisitely, forming a thought hitherto unpredictable yet, somehow, now inevitable. How many beautiful sentences does a prose writer need to compose before he or she is acknowledged a master? A hundred? Five hundred? A thousand? I may have struck off a dozen or so in my time, and when I have done so I have always known it, for—swish! goal! touchdown!—there is no other feeling like it.

Style in prose is intelligence perfectly formulated. Style is also a writer's way of seeing the world—"a question," as Proust wrote, "not of technique but of vision." And style has very little to do with the "communication" that Miss Lamott seems to think is the point of writing. The point of writing isn't communication—pandas, lions, seagulls, after all, communicate—nor is it information, of which the world already has more than a surfeit.

The point of writing is discovery. The writer discovers first for himself, by moving words around, bringing out surprising new meanings in them through arranging them in never-before-seen combinations. And if he hits upon the perfect combination, a light goes off, and the world will seem a brighter place to him and his readers. The result is a sentence called "crafted" or, when it really comes off, in Anne Lamott's phrase, "beautifully crafted."

If Miss Lamott calls, by the way, tell her I'm at lunch. Sorry to have missed her.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Challenging China

In his first inaugural address, President James Monroe rightly declared that "national honor is national property of the highest value." In their recent editorial "A National Humiliation" (April 16/April 23), Robert Kagan and William Kristol have essentially described how the Bush administration is squandering that property by its timid response to China.

Our principal concern should not have been "our folks on Hainan island," as Bush called them. Those folks, all military personnel who were aware of the dangers of their mission, were well treated. Our principal concern should be to reverse the impression of weakness and fear that has so far characterized American action. Perhaps we can do that by the steps catalogued by Kagan and Kristol. My own preference is for surveillance flights to resume immediately—this time with our own fighter escorts.

Eric Grant
Elk Grove, CA

I read with interest the editorial accusing George W. Bush of "humiliating" America with the method he used in dealing with China. It was presumptive and premature.

Bush did not capitulate, nor did he negate our use of international air space, nor our right to sell Taiwan the military hardware they need. How the rest of the world spins the situation can't be controlled but I am not at all surprised at anti-American sentiment after eight years of the Clinton administration. What surprises me is the way your magazine spun the story. Please get back on the Republican side and play the game with the team.

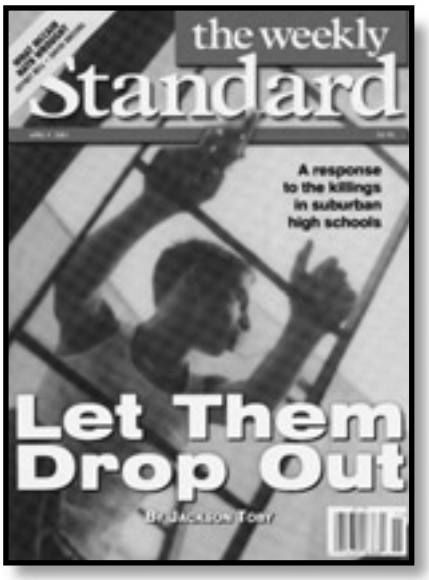
Joseph Altonji
Scottsboro, AL

With regard to your "National Humiliation" editorial: Stick to your guns. We may be able to make Clintonesque claims that our repeated use of the word "regret" was not an apology, but make no mistake—the damage has been done.

We might reduce the damage already done by taking tough actions against China now, but we have taught them the wrong lesson. They now know they can affect American rhetoric and policy to their advantage by holding Americans hostage, and that their only mistake was to release their hostages.

Our show of weakness may have reduced the time in captivity of 24 American servicemen, but it has increased the risks to many thousands more over years to come. When a strong nation allows itself to appear weak, the cost of reestablishing the perception of strength is high, unjustifiable, and often paid in blood.

James Eckert
Rochester, NY



Bull or Bear?

While John Makin is right to draw attention to the seriousness of the downturn, the risk of depression is lower than he suggests in his article "Recession or Depression?" (April 16/April 23).

Makin correctly points out that the bursting of speculative bubbles has often preceded downturns. However, there are also cases where collapses in the stock market have had only minor effects. The 1987 crash, in which the market lost a third of its value in two months, led to only one quarter of weakness, followed by a boom in 1988.

In order for a deep recession to emerge, several other problems have to occur simultaneously. The classic pattern for postwar recessions was a buildup in inflation, followed by a drastic tightening of monetary policy. During the inflationary period, inventories were overbuilt, so that much of the subsequent loss in output was due to the liquidation of stocks. In the deepest postwar recessions, 1974-75 and 1981-82, this pattern was aggravated by a rise in world oil prices.

In 2000, we went through a milder version of this pattern. While there was a rise in world energy prices and an excess of inventory, as of April 2001, inventories have been largely rebalanced and energy prices have leveled off. Moreover, the buildup in domestic inflation was absent as higher productivity, driven by technological advances, held labor costs in check. While monetary policy was tightened too much in early 2000, the Federal Reserve reversed course and cut rates by 150 basis points in early 2001 and might well reduce rates even further.

In sum, the preconditions for a depression/deep recession are not present. Instead, while the economy went through several weak quarters, it is likely to return to higher growth in the second half of the year.

Jerry J. Jasinowski
President
National Association of Manufacturers
Washington, DC

No Double-Dip

John Podhoretz's article "George W. Bush and the R-Word" (April 2) criticizes former President Bush and other administration officials for their public statements.

In my case, his critique was that I "announced . . . the recession had ended" in June 1991, shortly before "a double-dip back into negative growth." The recession ended in March 1991, three months before my statement. There was no double-dip into negative growth thereafter. Accompanying my statement that the recession was over was the observation that the early part of the recovery was likely to be weak, and that solid growth would not resume until 1992. That is exactly what occurred.

Michael J. Boskin
Hoover Institution
Stanford, CA

Correspondence

Far East Domination

William Hawkins's recounting of how U.S. corporations helped build the Nazi war machine right up to the outbreak of World War II should sound alarm bells for the Bush administration ("Commerce Uber Alles," April 9). In addition to corporate America, today we have Sinophilic scholars, former government officials, and State Department hangers-on parroting China's policy positions in unison in the halls of our government.

China's policy goal is *Fukuo Ch'iangpeng* (wealthy nation, powerful military). China wants to replace our country as the dominant power in Asia and, if a complacent United States permits, to rule the world as the Middle Kingdom.

The absorption of Taiwan is the first step. Reducing Japan into a vassal state is the next. If we blithely concentrate on trade with China, the next generation of Americans could face the danger of a nuclear Pearl Harbor.

We need to stop exporting military and dual-use technologies to China. The Bush team needs to develop a consensus world strategic view and concrete strategic goals in Asia. One objective may be to deter a potentially hostile power from gaining hegemony over Asia. How we resolve the air collision standoff and decide on arms sales to Taiwan should be consistent with our overarching economic and security interests in the Western Pacific.

Jay Loo
Lansdale, PA

Keeping Kids Safe

Thank you for Jackson Toby's wonderful article on the school shootings and some of their causes ("Let Them Drop Out," April 9). I agree with his idea that there are some students who should be allowed to drop out until they are more ready to handle the academic and social rigors of school.

I have an additional solution: Just one time, hold the parents of the shooter criminally liable for the horrible damage done by their child. Not so long ago parents were responsible for what their children wrought until age 18. What happened? Where did that law go? I am very tired of seeing and reading of parents who say they had no idea what was going on in their own home. If just one set of parents were prosecuted for the crime of their minor child, you can bet you would have the undivided attention of parents everywhere.

Judy Beumler
Louisville, KY

Grace Under Fire

In the spirit of misery loving company, I took guilty pleasure in reading Richard Starr's article on the airy-fairy nature of current hymnody in the Catholic Church ("Slightly Amazing Grace," April 2). As a lifelong Lutheran recently broken with the Evangelical Lutheran Church over shared communion and pastorates with the Episcopalians, I saw it all coming when the ecumenical Lutheran *Book of Worship* replaced the old *Service Book* in 1978.

Luther wrote "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," often called the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation." The great poetry of the original and its long-lived English translation aside, the meat of the hymn was taken out. "The Tempter's power is great, and armed with cruel hate, on Earth is not his equal," has become "The old evil foe, sworn to work us woe, with dread craft and might he arms himself to fight, on earth he has no equal." Satan isn't scary anymore, he's just tricky, and he's sworn to it. As for "Amazing Grace," that hymn, along with Luther's sermon on God's grace, saved me at a very dark time in my life. Had the current versions been my only anchor, I would long since have been six feet under. I was pretty much a wretch, and probably a worm, too.

Laurence G. Hawk
San Francisco, CA

Richard Starr's comments concerning the changing of the words to this horrible hymn reflect a poor understanding of both Catholic theology and Christology. The hymn's author may have felt like a wretch, but Christians are a "holy nation, a priestly people," according to St. Paul, who certainly has a better grasp of Christianity than Calvin. If Starr wonders where this self-esteem rage of the past 20 years comes from, I suggest he read Chapter II of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "The People of God" promulgated by the Church's Vatican II Council, and the writings of St. Paul in any authorized Bible.

John C. Gmelch
Harrisburg, PA

The problem with "gender neutral" and "politically correct" texts making their way into religious music in the Church is not limited to the liberal rewrite of lyrics. The official language of the Roman Catholic Church is Latin. Although hard to find, Richard Starr may want to consider relieving himself of the banal Vatican II worship service by attending the traditional Latin Mass. It's the same Mass that saints and martyrs attended throughout civilization. Laymen with nothing better to do with their lives except serve on committees and subcommittees in order to bastardize tradition stay away from the traditional Latin Mass.

Kenneth J. Wolfe
Alexandria, VA

Correction

Because of an editing error, in John Wilson's review of *Aiding and Abetting* in our last issue, the date of publication for Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was given as 1969 instead of 1961.

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Will China Pay No Price?

On April 1, a Chinese pilot, pursuant to the Chinese government policy of harassing U.S. surveillance planes, knocked an American EP-3 from the sky. The Chinese government then held the American aircrew hostage for 11 days, and extorted a letter of apology from the Bush administration.

Will China now pay a price? Some of our conservative friends who supported the Bush administration's handling of this matter have expressed confidence that the answer is yes. We hope they're right.

For the moment, it's easier to list the areas where China will not pay a price. Trade? Forget it. The administration opposes any linkage between trade and other aspects of Chinese behavior, and brave congressional talk about voting against China's most-favored-nation status when it comes up for renewal this year has melted away since the return of the American crew. Human rights? The U.N. resolution calling for a review of China's human rights record was voted down last week, with no greater U.S. success in persuading other nations to join with us than in previous years. President Bush's trip to Beijing this fall? So far, it's going ahead as scheduled. The 2008 Olympics? We have already begun hearing from the China engagers that giving Beijing the Olympics is good idea because it will encourage better behavior by Chinese leaders both at home and abroad—just like the Berlin Olympics in 1936.

Then there is the matter of American military activities in the South China Sea. During and immediately after the hostage crisis, we heard a lot of bold talk about how the United States would not be deterred from continuing to fly its surveillance planes over the South China Sea and that the flights would resume immediately. There was even a recommendation from within the military to send the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* into the South China Sea as a show of resolve.

But the administration has apparently decided to proceed more cautiously. As this magazine goes to press, surveillance flights off China's coast remain on hold. If and when they do resume, Pentagon officials suggest, U.S. planes will stay out of the South China Sea for a while, to give the Chinese some breathing room and to avoid provoking Beijing. Far from paying a price, therefore, China has so far won a small victory. Before the crisis, American surveillance planes were routinely flying in international waters over the South China Sea. Today they aren't. It's that simple. The *Kitty Hawk*, meanwhile, is steaming away from China.

So what's left? The pending decision on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

Bush administration officials have said that the recent crisis with China should not and will not affect the president's decision on what arms to sell Taiwan. That would be fine with us. Because selling our democratic friends in Taiwan only what they need to defend themselves against China would by itself be a significant step toward repairing the damage done to the U.S. position in East Asia this month.

What does Taiwan need? It needs new submarines. It needs new destroyers. It needs new missiles for its jet fighters. And Taiwan needs the U.S. Navy's Aegis battle management system. An honest decision on weapons sales, based solely on an objective assessment of what Taiwan needs, would provide Taiwan all of these.

You don't have to take our word for it. All you have to do is ask the Pentagon. Late last year officers from the U.S. Pacific fleet reviewed Taiwan's defense needs and came to these conclusions.

China, which in recent years has purchased advanced Soviet-made destroyers and submarines, now threatens to overwhelm Taiwan's outmoded naval arsenal. China's sub fleet outnumbers Taiwan's 65-4 (and two of Taiwan's subs are World War II-era Guppies). The Pentagon study concluded that Taiwan badly needs a new fleet of submarines and P-3 aircraft to hunt for subs and conduct patrols. Any weapons package that does not contain submarines and P-3s will deal a fundamental blow to Taiwan's ability to defend itself in the event of a Chinese naval blockade or other form of naval attack.

The Pentagon study also concluded that Taiwan needs the Aegis system. China, in addition to building up its naval and submarine force, is rapidly improving the quality of its air force, acquiring large numbers of Russian fighters and fighter-bombers. Unless Taiwan improves its air defenses, the Pentagon found, "the balance of air power . . . could begin to shift in China's favor." Meanwhile, China is engaged in a massive build-up of its missile forces—both supersonic anti-ship missiles and ballistic missiles. China now has 300 short-range ballistic missiles targeted on Taiwan and is adding 50 new missiles every year. Chinese strategy is clear: They hope to build a missile force capable of dealing a paralyzing blow against Taiwan—long be-

fore American forces could arrive on the scene.

The Aegis system, the Pentagon review concluded, offers the best and, indeed, the only answer to this panoply of missile and air threats. The Aegis radar can, in all kinds of weather, track more than 100 targets, and direct ship-fired missiles at them. It could also serve in the future as a platform for a theater missile defense system. A decision to go ahead with the Aegis sale now would represent a serious and long-term U.S. commitment to Taiwan's ability to defend itself. The Aegis won't be ready for delivery for several years. In the meantime, selling Taiwan several Kidd-class destroyers will serve as a stopgap—but not as a substitute for Aegis.

The Pentagon study was conducted long before the recent collision over the South China Sea. Indeed, the review began under the Clinton administration. Its conclusions aren't Democratic or Republican, conservative or liberal, hawkish or dovish. The Pentagon report represents the best judgment of American military professionals. It is the closest thing we have to an objective assessment of what Taiwan needs to defend itself against China.

That makes the choice for President Bush fairly straightforward. But China has warned that the sale of Aegis to Taiwan will lead to a rupture in Sino-American relations. And according to press reports, top administration officials are recommending that the president defer the sale of Aegis. The president should overrule these advisers and follow the recommendations outlined in the Pentagon study. Otherwise, Taiwan will be the one paying the price for Beijing's aggressive behavior.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

An Engagement with Tyranny

> Before the next series of important decisions about China tumble onto Mr. Bush's desk, he and his aides should settle on a long-term strategy that protects American interests while encouraging China to play a constructive role as it assumes its natural place as a great power. Mr. Bush outlined a reasonable approach after the release of the American crew members when he said the United States and China "have different values, yet common interests" and that both nations "must make a determined choice to have productive relations." The United States and China need not become enemies. . . . Though Chinese rhetoric was often belligerent, Beijing ultimately yielded without the apology for the collision that it had demanded. In the end, Mr. Jiang acted as a statesman, not an ideological combatant.
>
> *—New York Times editorial, April 15, 2001*

> As regards future policy, it seems to me that there are really only two possible alternatives. One of them is to base yourself upon the view that any sort of friendly relation, or possible relations, shall I say, with totalitarian states are impossible, and that the assurances which have been given to me personally are worthless, that they have sinister designs. . . . [Or] we should seek by all means in our power to avoid war, by analyzing possible causes, by trying to remove them, by discussion in a spirit of collaboration and good will. I cannot believe that such a program would be rejected by the people of this country, even if it does mean the establishment of personal contact with dictators, and of talks man to man on the basis that each, while maintaining his own ideas of the internal government of his country, is willing to allow that other systems may suit better other peoples.
>
> *—Neville Chamberlain, three days after Munich, October 3, 1938*

Yes, of course, we know the analogy is imperfect. The United States is not England in the 1930s, and mainland China is not Nazi Germany. For one thing, we have not abandoned our modern democratic ally, Taiwan, as the British gave up Czechoslovakia. Nor does there appear serious reason to fear imminent genocide on the Asian continent. It has already come and gone; China's Communists concluded the last of their orgiastic mass murders a quarter century ago. But they continue in power. And they continue to maintain their gigantic archipelago of *laogai*—concentration camps, nothing less—into which thousands of Chinese who dare think illegal thoughts disappear each year. China, in short, remains a tyranny.

Should the mere fact that Jiang Zemin is not Adolf Hitler be sufficient to qualify him a "statesman"? And should the United States be eager to conduct "productive relations"—or even imagine it *can*—with the regime Jiang leads, properly understood? We don't think so.

But the people who control and propagandize current

American policy toward China disagree. Working backward from theoretical abstraction to adduce a promising "reality" that suits their wishes, they deride as so many solitary trees that forest of evidence that the People's Republic is a political malignancy. And they indignantly recoil from—no, mock—any suggestion that this malignancy might impose certain practical and moral obligations on the world's leading democracy. In this respect, at least, the analogy between Sinophile "engagement" and old-fashioned appeasement is nearly exact. A "Cliveden set" mentality now dominates American opinion about China, one as naive, self-righteous, and insensible to the demands of honor as that which suffused Lady Astor's tea parties before World War II.

Thus, when Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* worries about China, he worries that . . . democracy could arrive in China too quickly! "Trying to collapse the Chinese regime overnight," Friedman explains, "would produce a degree of chaos among one-fifth of the world's inhabitants" that would have a most unfortunate effect on American living standards, even—somehow—the quality of "the air that we breathe." For the United States to court such ruin by responding in kind to Beijing's occasional provocations would be "utterly, utterly foolhardy." So no real confrontation with China's rulers, please. Engagement is much the more sensible course.

Last week, Hong Kong police finally located Leung Wah, co-founder of a U.S.-based dissident group. He had been roasted alive.

But it is craven. And worse.

Shortly after the last issue of this magazine went to press, China finally released the hostage crew of that now-famous U.S. military surveillance plane. Since then, if you know where to look for it, news has emerged on an almost daily basis of other recent—and graver—Chinese assaults on American citizens or residents or refugee visitors. American University sociologist Gao Zhan, wife and mother of U.S. citizens, detained in Beijing since February 11, has been formally accused of "espionage," a crime to which the Chinese foreign ministry ominously reports she has "confessed." Last week it was revealed that a naturalized U.S. citizen, Wu Xianming, had been detained April 8 on similarly unspecified "spy" charges. Last week it was confirmed that two permanent U.S. residents, Tan Guangguang and Xu Zerong, had been arrested by the Chinese state security service—the first man last December, the second last August—and both, again, accused of espionage.

Also last week, Hong Kong police finally located Leung Wah. Leung was co-founder of a U.S.-based dissident group, the China Democratic Unity Federation, and was Hong Kong representative of its principal publication, *China Spring*—at least when he was not busy acting as a financial courier to underground democracy activists on the mainland. For several days in mid-November last year, Leung was in Los Angeles to attend a pro-democracy meeting of Chinese exiles. Almost immediately after he returned to Hong Kong, he received an unsolicited phone call from a stranger who promised lucrative business opportunities in the mainland city of Shenzhen. He was seen in Shenzhen, by several accounts in police custody, on November 22. Leung was not seen again until April 13, when officials in Hong Kong announced that his had been the body dumped outside Shenzhen's hospital on November 23. They'd had to use dental records to identify the corpse. Leung Wah had been roasted alive.

Is there no atrocity base enough to interrupt our "productive relations" with China's dictatorship? Apparently not. In response to this latest round of assaults on people with institutional or legal connections to the United States, our State Department last week managed only to suggest that Americans might want to "carefully evaluate" such incidents before "deciding whether to travel to China." In response to the Beijing regime's ongoing assault against its own population, the State Department's delegation to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva last week asked the organization to express "concern" about certain "reports" of brutality, reports that might otherwise obscure the "significant transformation that Chinese society has undergone since the introduction of the reform policies." The U.S. draft resolution was defeated. It would hardly have been worth bragging about had it succeeded.

Sir Harold Nicolson, with Winston Churchill one of the few prominent Englishmen bold and brave enough to repudiate appeasement before the German invasion of Poland, was jeered in the House of Commons for his criticism of Neville Chamberlain's Munich Agreement. "I know in these days of 'realism,' principles are considered as rather eccentric and ideals are identified with 'hysteria,'" he replied. "I know that those of us who believe in the traditions of our policy, who believe in the precepts which we have inherited from our ancestors, who believe that one great function of this country is to maintain moral standards in Europe, to maintain a settled pattern of international relations, not to make friends with people who are demonstrably evil, . . . I know that those who hold such beliefs are accused of possessing the 'Foreign Office mind.' I thank God that I possess the Foreign Office mind."

Would that such a mind existed in the United States today—in our diplomatic offices or anywhere else.

—David Tell, for the Editors

The China Lineup

You can't tell the players without a scorecard.

BY DAVID BROOKS

THE CHINA STANDOFF produced some strange bedfellows. Most commentators thought it ended with a clear triumph for the Bush administration. On the left, Frank Rich and Anthony Lewis thought so, and David Broder and Warren Rudman in the center agreed. So did Paul Gigot and Charles Krauthammer on the right. A smaller group felt the Bush team failed to stand up for American interests and honor. They included Gary Bauer and the editors of this magazine on the right, the editors of the *New Republic* in the center (they called the administration's "very sorry" letter a classic act of appeasement), and columnists like Mark Shields on the left. Still others thought the test of wills ended in a tie (Peggy Noonan at the *Wall Street Journal*) or were ambivalent (*National Review*).

Among politicians, support for the Bush administration came in different shades. Democrats like Mario Cuomo, Chris Dodd, and Barbara Boxer were rhapsodic, and so were many Republicans. Other conservatives, such as Henry Hyde and Jon Kyl, sounded worried that the United States had been too soft.

These unpredictable alliances underline a phenomenon we've been seeing now for several years. On domestic policy, the battle lines are fixed, while on foreign policy, alliances are shifting. On taxes, the budget, and Medicare, it's like World War I—easy to tell who's on which side, with no one moving. But foreign policy is like the board game Risk: There are lots of players, each one's strength rises and falls with each turn, and you never know who's your friend or your foe. One possible conclusion is that if there is to be a fundamental shake-up in American politics, it will come when a foreign policy crisis swamps domestic concerns.

It's very hard to predict how new alliances will form. But the Hainan situation offered a clue. People weighed in from all perspectives, and one issue that divided them seems large enough to someday be the axis around which new disputes will form—namely, the redemptive power of capitalism. Let's take a look at the four main schools of thought that supported the Bush approach, in ascending order of intellectual seriousness:

⋆ *Clintonism.* Some people supported the Bush strategy on the grounds that it doesn't really matter what's in some stupid letter. The important thing is to get our young people back to safety. As Sen. Boxer put it on CNN's *Late Edition*, "Words will never really be the issue here. If it took a few words to get those wonderful people home, good, there was no damage done by that." This is the foreign policy version of Clintonism. Words are just tools you can spin and twist to get what you want. It depends on what the definition of "very sorry" is.

There is not much intellectual substance here, but there is an impulse, and a very strong one: Let's not make trouble for ourselves. People who share this impulse see the world as filled with thorny and unpleasant trouble spots, and believe the United States should have as little contact with them as possible. It doesn't matter what we say, or what abstract principles we end up betraying, let's just get out of nasty places. Each foreign policy problem is a discrete crisis, and if we can extricate ourselves from it, we will have survived another day to enjoy our happiness at home.

This impulse, a kind of ad hoc timidity, is shared by some on the left and right, on issues ranging from Bosnia to Africa to the Middle East.

⋆ *Team Spirit.* The second argument that was used in favor of the Bush approach was also based more on impulse than on intellect. The impulse was loyalty. Over the past few years, American politics has become less ideological but more partisan. Millions of people will automatically and furiously support their party leader, almost no matter what he does. Democrats, who loathe small invasions and bombing raids on places like Sudan when Republicans order them, were suddenly supportive when Bill Clinton launched them. Meanwhile, Republicans, who froth at the slightest hint of softening toward communism when it comes from Democrats, took it in stride when George W. Bush led the way.

The ideological movements on both left and right have now become divisions within the party organizations. During the Cold War, members of the conservative movement had an arms-length relationship with the GOP and with the business community. Republicans and corporate types could be allies, but conservatives mistrusted them. Among other things, the business types were perpetually trying to sell the Soviets the rope to hang us.

But now there no longer have to be regular fights over how to deal with the Soviets, so conservatives and business people are not reminded of any fundamental differences between them. What's more, the Republican party has become more conservative, so there is much less ideological distance between the movement and the party. And conservatives have become part of the national establishment, so that some activists who would have been con-

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sidered beyond the fringe by corporate types a decade ago are now on $10,000 a month retainers.

These days, conservatives and Republicans more often think of one another as members of the same team. There is no longer a bright line separating the pool of conservative intellectuals and journalists from the pool of Republican officeholders. Now there is something of an expectation that activists, commentators, and rank and file conservatives should behave like Republican organization workers. They should help articulate the Republican position. They should say helpful things on television. They should write helpful articles. It's okay to register disagreements in calm moments, but at times of conflict, everybody is expected to rally for our side.

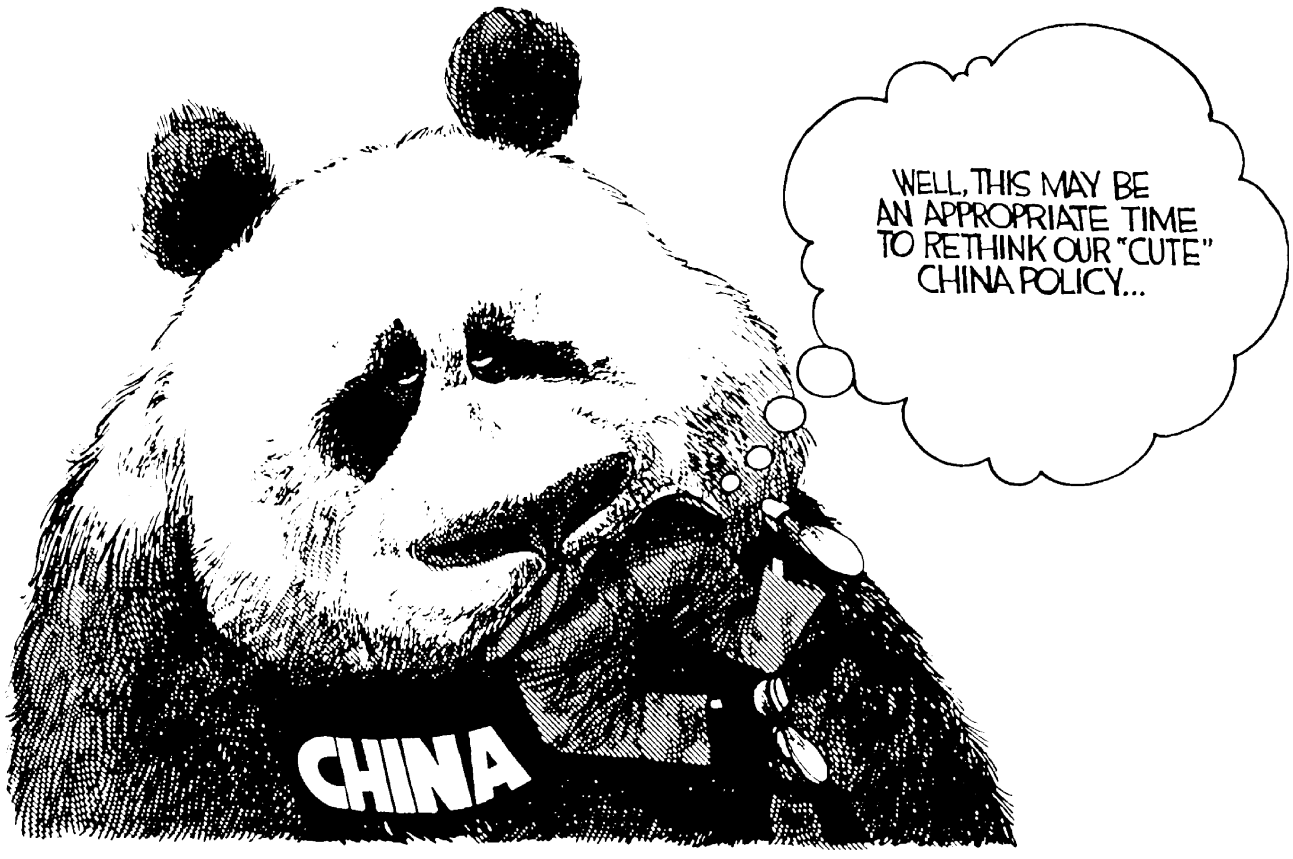
A similar transformation has occurred on the left—as the Lewinsky scandal made clear, when liberal groups universally betrayed their feminist principles to stand by their party leader. This means that both liberalism and conservatism are less intellectually dynamic. Pressure to conform to the party line leads to groupthink, and narrows the parameters of acceptable debate.

But the phenomenon also means that any foreign policy position an administration takes will have an army of rabid supporters—an army belonging to the party of the president who initiates the policy.

* *Realism*. During the China standoff, the Bush administration received strong support from Henry Kissinger and the vast bulk of the East Coast foreign policy apparatus. These are the realists. They are the latest iteration of a tradition that grew up in European palaces and looks back to events like the Congress of Vienna as paradigms of foreign policymaking. On these shores, it was cultivated within the gracious quadrangles of Ivy League universities.

Devotees of this school see foreign policy as an intricate game played by worldly grown-ups. They are impatient with moral huffing and puffing, and barely tolerant of "political pressures" that rise up from voters. They see foreign policy as a series of power rivalries that must be managed and mastered.

Fareed Zakaria expressed the realist position with admirable clarity in an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* called "Bush's Grown-Up Approach to China." He argued that throughout the 1990s, the Republican party behaved like spoiled children: "irresponsible, . . . railing against the world instead of setting about to mend things." But Bush is finally forcing Republicans to act like adults. By getting his hands dirty, by compromising with Chinese thugs, he is dealing with the world as it is, and facing the hard realities that



Michael Ramirez

mature people grapple with.

The *Washington Post*'s Jim Hoagland (who is not of this school) noted that the Bush letter "could have come, proudly, from the Quai d'Orsay or any other European foreign ministry"—which is essentially why it so thrilled the realists. In the European mode, realists distrust grand visions of a world made safe for democracy. They prize order, and don't entertain idealistic notions of democratic revolutions. (Thus, Colin Powell, during the Reagan administration, was one of those who furiously lobbied to remove the sentence "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" from Reagan's Berlin speech, believing it important to engage the Soviets diplomatically and not ruffle their feathers.)

You wouldn't think that George W. Bush, the guy from Midland, Texas, who detests Ivy League elitists, would be a favorite with the realists. But the realist hand is especially strong now. That's because commercial considerations have come to dominate foreign policy. The patricians who used to go into foreign policy did so because they wanted a life above commerce. But now diplomacy and commerce have merged, and you have outfits like Kissinger Associates that are part foreign-policy think tank, part consulting firm. They can pursue their double mission because these days business and foreign policy share methods and goals: engagement, compromise, deal-making. Neither business people nor diplomats have an interest in raising issues of human rights or democratic rights that might disturb business with dictators.

⋆ *Tough-minded Free Trade*. There is a final school that, unlike the realists, has both a short-term strategy and a long-term vision. These are the Tough-minded Free Traders, who believe in simultaneous political (and if necessary military) confrontation and economic engagement. They want to deter China's political expansionism with power, but strengthen China's business class with trade.

Unlike the realists, they are willing to stand up to Beijing. But they also believe that the best way to destroy Chinese communism is through trade. As Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* put it, "Let China join the World Trade Organization, but also sell a robust arms package to Taiwan."

The argument is quite compelling: Build up a merchant middle class within China. Let the Chinese leaders see that they can get rich only if they play by international rules. Wait for the indigenous bourgeoisie to demand political freedom to go along with its economic freedom. Then watch China slowly evolve, as Chile and the Asian Tigers have, from authoritarianism to democracy.

There are only a couple of problems with the tough-minded-free-trade analysis. First, is it politically realistic? It's easy to say we should be both tough and soft on China. But in practice won't all those business lobbyists insist that we be always soft? When it actually comes to defending Taiwan or getting tough with China on a myriad of issues, won't they insist that the United States do nothing that could destabilize their business deals? In other words, U.S. administrations may posture as Tough-minded Free Traders, only to end up as Realists, willing to ignore or minimize every outrage, tolerate every instance of misbehavior, and excuse every abuse of human rights, every breach of the laws of civilized behavior.

Second, the theory puts a lot of faith in the power of capitalism to transform tyrannies into democracies. History offers some examples in which the market has sweetened manners, but there are also plenty of instances where the economically minded have overestimated the civilizing power of trade. In 1912, conventional wisdom held that the European nations could never go to war because they were bound so tightly by trade links. Of course they did go to war. When the Soviet Union fell, Western free marketeers rushed to Moscow, believing that if we could only put in place the right economic reform plan everything would turn out all right. Free marketeers also argued that economic bonds would soften conflicts in places like the Middle East. But in the Middle East as elsewhere, there are those who think that some things are more important than money.

The timid will always look for ways to avoid foreign policy crises. The party loyalists will always follow their leaders. The realists will always look for negotiating tables to crowd around. But if you want a real substantive debate, look to the Tough-minded Free Traders—and, confronting them, the people who condemned the Bush response to Hainan. Because if you survey the backgrounds of the Bush administration's critics, you find in all cases people who have doubts about the healing power of commerce. You see people who believe that ideas shape history more than economic forces. You see people who believe that a foreign policy largely shaped by commercial interests is likely to be a craven and amoral foreign policy.

The argument between socialism and capitalism is over. Now, the argument is about whether capitalism deserves two cheers or three. The two-cheers crowd, on left and right, want sometimes to rise above commercial considerations. The three-cheers crowd are skeptical about this. Maybe this will be the next big debate, not only in the foreign policy sphere (How do we deal with China?), but also in social policy (How do we regulate biotechnology?) and even fiscal policy (Do we give tax breaks to stay-at-home moms or entrepreneurs?).

If it is—if the next big debate is about the limits of our allegiance to commerce—that Chinese pilot will have clarified the future. Maybe the guy actually deserves the medal he's getting posthumously as a martyr to the revolution. ♦

Bush's Stealth Budget Strategy

The budget director's plan to shrink government.

BY FRED BARNES

IT'S NOT A TARGET, insists Mitch Daniels, the White House budget chief. It's not even a goal. But if a cold, dry number can be exciting, it's the most thrilling one in President Bush's first budget. The number is 15.6 percent. It's the share of the national economy the federal government would spend in 2011—the smallest since 1951. Getting to 15.6 percent or anywhere near it would be a breathtaking achievement in reducing the size and role of government. "We didn't start with that number and work back," says Daniels. But it would be "a happy outcome." In government spending, he says, "lower is better. It's like the welfare rolls."

Moderating the federal share of the economy so dramatically is hardly a sure thing. In 2001, government outlays are expected to be 18 percent of the gross domestic product. And several key assumptions would have to be realized to reach the vicinity of 15.6 percent: continued economic growth, annual federal budgets that increase no more than inflation, a conservative in the White House, and perhaps a Republican Congress. In an era of surpluses, the task is all the more difficult. "As soon as the surplus showed up three years ago, all restraint [on spending] evaporated," says Daniels. "It will take a lot of work to bring back restraint." Starting with Republicans this year. Senate Republicans voted with Democrats to jack up spending, tentatively, by 8 percent in 2002. This rate of growth over 10 years would not only swallow the surplus and prevent any paring of Washington's bite of the economy, it would also wipe out two-thirds of projected debt reduction and cut deeply into the Social Security surplus.

The White House is a bit shy about touting the 15.6 percent figure. Yes, it would delight conservatives by foreshadowing a triumph beyond their wildest dreams. But it would alarm Democratic members of Congress. During Daniels's confirmation hearing, several Democratic senators brought up the prospect, unappealing to them, of a declining federal share of the economy. So, to avoid terrifying Democrats and members of the media who reflexively favor higher spending, the budget office's chart with 15.6 percent as the end point in spending was not included in any of the four budget documents released publicly. Still, White House aides talk yearningly about it in private.

Mitch Daniels

Illustration by Ismael Roldan

Daniels was an unlikely choice for director of the Office of Management and Budget. He was not involved in Bush's presidential campaign and scarcely knew Bush. He worked in Washington as chief of staff to GOP senator Richard Lugar of Indiana from 1977 to 1984, then spent three years at the Reagan White House as a presidential assistant for intergovernmental and political affairs. Since then, he's been an executive for Eli Lilly, the pharmaceutical firm based in Indianapolis. In speculation about the budget post, Daniels's name never surfaced. How did he get the job? Al Hubbard, an Indiana businessman, a classmate of Bush at Harvard Business School and a close friend of the president, recommended Daniels directly to Bush. Vice President Dick Cheney and Andy Card, the White House chief of staff, both knew Daniels from his Washington days and strongly backed him for the budget post.

Daniels says it's the only job he's "remotely qualified for" that he actually would have taken. He's proved to be skillful in packaging and promoting the budget. Karl Rove, Bush's top political adviser, says Daniels has "an incredible mind," an "ability to retain numbers," and a philosophical perspective on the proper role of government. Daniels is mild-mannered, but has a cutting sense of humor. He explained a reduction in Energy Department spending by noting the department's budget had risen artificially in 2000 to deal with the aftermath of the fire near Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. "We had a big debate at OMB and decided not to start another fire this year," he told reporters at a White House briefing.

A striking feature of the budget produced by Daniels is its cleverness. Bush was "very explicit," Daniels

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says, about avoiding fights over symbolic issues where little money would be saved and the White House would probably be overriden by Congress anyway. Thus the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, loathed by conservatives but supported by many in Congress, were spared serious cuts. Reductions at President Clinton's signature AmeriCorps program were minimal. Cuts at the Environmental Protection Agency were proposed mostly by eliminating "earmarks" by Congress for pork barrel projects not requested by the Clinton administration. More broadly, the budget proposed to axe half the 6,454 earmarks, at a saving of $8 billion.

To Daniels's surprise, the spending reduction that has gotten the most flak from Democrats and the press is the winding down of President Clinton's popular program to hire 100,000 local police officers. Funds are already appropriated for hiring 115,000 cops, Daniels told reporters, and now some of the money should be used for school security. Congress enacted the program, he said, as a three-year startup. The grant application "says in six places that this is for three years only." After that, local governments are specifically obliged to pick up the tab for the new police. "So the benefits of the program will continue and we simply took the Congress at its word," he said. "Silly us."

For all the complaints, phasing out the police program is easy compared with the larger assignment of restraining spending over a decade. That task has been made harder by the surge in tax revenues in the Clinton years. In the 1980s, it was assumed if the tax take exceeded 18 percent of GDP, a tax revolt would erupt. But revenues rose to 20.7 percent under Clinton without the faintest sign of a taxpayers' rebellion. With spending at 18 percent, that means there's a whopping surplus. The trick is to *not let the government* spend the surplus. Recent history suggests that task is hopeless. Nonetheless, Daniels, with the magic number of 15.6 percent in the back of his mind, is eager to try. ♦

The Limits of Free Trade

Listen to Adam Smith.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

LET'S LEAVE to the diplomatic hair-splitters the question of whether "very sorry" constitutes an apology. And let's agree that not everyone who favors preserving preferential trade treatment for China is a greedy capitalist, insensitive to China's appalling human rights record and its recent display of lawlessness in forcing down an airplane in international air space and holding the crew as hostages. Some who want to prolong China's special trade treatment and welcome it into the World Trade Organization undoubtedly are convinced that free trade with that country is in America's economic interests—that free trade is so unambiguously valuable to our nation's interests that there can never be reason for using the trade carrot or the protectionist stick as an instrument of national policy.

Others, among them many China critics who cannot be accused of covert protectionist leanings, disagree. To them, trade is merely one in the arsenal of weapons to be used to implement the nation's foreign policy. Listening to this debate, the public seems to have decided that both protagonists are right: It votes with its dollars in favor of the free trade that brings cheaper goods to its shopping malls, and simultaneously tells pollsters that trade restrictions are sometimes necessary to protect specific industries, or to "get even" with countries that misbehave towards the United States.

Start with an undeniable fact: A good part of the post-World War II prosperity and economic growth is attributable to the liberal trading regime erected, step by step, after the war by a combination of American policymakers and Britain's John Maynard Keynes. Columbia University's Jagdish Bhagwati contends that his study of data relating to trade, income, and other economic variables establishes "the overwhelming probability that diminishing trade barriers were a major contributory force in the postwar expansion of incomes." And Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan contends that "the dramatic increase in world competition—a consequence of broadening trade flows—has fostered markedly higher standards of living for almost all countries that have participated in cross-border trade, . . . most especially the United States."

The mechanism by which elimination of tariffs and other barriers to trade contributes to the wealth of nations has long been understood. Adam Smith summed it up by saying, "If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry, employed in a way in which we have some advantage." Free trade permits each country to do what it does most efficiently, and to trade that lowest-cost output for the goods of other countries specializing in what they do best. What writers today would call a win-win situation.

Writers, that is, who are not troubled by serious doubts about where such reasoning leads, doubts that immediately trouble policy types, who see freer trade as only one of many objectives of national policy. America now trades fighter planes for Middle East oil, an economically sen-

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sible arrangement, given the fact that Middle Eastern countries could not develop an aircraft industry except at exorbitant cost, and oil produced in the United States probably costs at least ten times as much as oil from the sands of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Win-win, surely. Or at least until the Arab countries decide to unsheathe what they call the oil weapon, and deny America access to their relatively cheap oil unless it tailors its foreign policy to the desires of the anti-Israel oil producers.

Similarly, Americans happily snatch from store shelves the low-cost sneakers and T-shirts that flow from China into the nation's malls, at one and the same time saving vast sums that would otherwise be spent on costlier made-in-the-USA shoes and garments, and helping impoverished Chinese workers begin the long ascent to Western standards of living. Win-win, surely. Until the Chinese use the technology we have exported and the fruits of their enormous trade surplus with America to make possible an arms build-up that threatens America's Asian allies, and requires us to beef up our military presence in the region.

Serious policy types also worry that free trade creates losers as well as winners. It benefits consumers while, at times, harming some workers and investors. Cheap steel from Korea may make various household goods cheaper for consumers, but it plays havoc with the paychecks of American steel workers. Cheap labor imported from Mexico may keep the cost of maintaining a Beverly Hills swimming pool lower than it would otherwise be, but it also demonstrably depresses the wages of unskilled Americans and, in times of less-than-full employment, threatens their jobs. Imported automobiles may be a boon to consumers, in no small part by putting pressure on domestic manufacturers to keep prices down and quality up, but they are unwelcome threats to the wages and benefits of American auto workers. Unless one is prepared to argue that there is some ethical reason why consumers are to be given preference over producers when making policy, this clash of interests must somehow be taken into account in formulating trade policy.

Joy at every trade-opening move is not bounded only by worries that such advances, albeit clearly in America's overall interest, create some losers. It is also mitigated at times by the feeling that easier access to the huge, affluent American market is a gift not to be bestowed on the unworthy. In this view, the promise of freer trade with America is an important policy tool for use in a wide range of circumstances: Access to American markets can be used as a carrot to get other countries to do things that we want them to do, and as a stick to get them to stop doing things that we don't want them to do.

True, if we deny others the benefit of access to our markets we are depriving our consumers of access to the most efficiently produced goods the world's producers can offer, but there are times when the sacrifice of that benefit is in the broader national interest, or in the interests of preserving some of the values that Americans see as their obligation to export to other, less fortunate nations. Because the benefits of trade are unevenly distributed, and because other considerations can be more important than increasing the efficiency of the international economy, even free-trading presidents at times have strayed from the straight and narrow. Some, it is true, bow to parochial protectionist pressures to win the votes of congressmen. But others have grander motives, such as the need to protect a key defense industry; or workers caught in the gale of international competition, now more commonly known as globalization; or the need to make it clear that treading on us can have serious consequences because we Americans do not live only to maximize the flow of goods and services in international commerce.

Complaints about the economic inefficiencies of such policies are, in the end, quite beside the point. If the people, speaking through their elected representatives, decide that forgoing cheap T-shirts is a small price to pay in order to deny support to a regime that has a repugnant human rights record, that is for them to decide. If a political decision is taken that it is somehow unfair to ask American firms to compete with subsidized foreign competitors, even if those subsidies represent wealth transfers from the taxpayers of the subsidizing nation to American consumers, that decision is in no sense irrational. It may be bad economics, but that does not automatically make it bad public policy. If nothing else, a sense that trade is "fair" as well as efficient is necessary to retain political support for ever-freer trade.

None of this is to say that economic considerations are irrelevant to the formulation of a trade policy that serves the national interest. Indeed, so significant are the benefits of free trade that policymakers should bring a bias in its favor to their work. This is important if for no other reason than that the producers who benefit from protectionism are concentrated and know who they are, while the consumers who benefit from free trade are diffuse and often not fully aware that their cost of living is being reduced by lower-cost imports. The resultant disparity of political power puts a responsibility on policymakers to enter the trade debate with a presumption in favor of the liberal trading regime that not only maximizes the availability of more efficiently produced goods from overseas, but puts pressure on domestic producers to become and remain efficient.

One need only recall the price and quality of home-made automobiles before the Japanese cracked the U.S. market, compared with the variety, quality, and prices now available, to understand these benefits.

When the presumption in favor of free trade is tested against the facts of specific pleas for exemption from its rigors, policymakers can use some help in deciding which cases warrant protection or special treatment, and which do not. Here, economists come in handy. They can compare the costs and benefits of policies aimed at redis-

tributing income from producers to consumers by supporting freer trade, and from consumers to producers by restricting the movement of goods and services in international commerce. The Bush administration, rumor has it, is preparing to grant special protection to the steel industry, either because "cheap imports" have produced a spate of bankruptcies, or because it wants steel-state congressman to vote to restore fast-track authority to the president. Such a move might make sense if it costs consumers (including domestic industries that use steel in their products), say, one billion dollars, but not if it costs them ten times that.

In any case, it is important to seek the cheapest solution to any trade problem that cries out for solution. In Britain, for example, it proved cheaper to grant generous lump-sum pensions to coal miners than to protect them from foreign competition or competition from other fuels. In America, to cite just one example, it might well prove cheaper to pension off beet sugar growers than to continue to protect them from imports of far cheaper cane sugar.

This sort of economic rationality has its uses, too, in the debate over the relation of trade to other issues. The China issue provides a perfect example. Were we to close our markets to Chinese goods—a practical impossibility given the difficulty of determining the origin of many products—we would have to bear some costs: higher prices for some consumer items, the possibility that China would retaliate by closing the few cracks through which American firms have managed to slip some goods and services into China, and the loss of such benefits as might be associated with a policy of engagement. Before deciding between satisfying our natural inclination to freer trade, and our desire to use access to our markets to induce China to modify some of its domestic policies and its aggressive foreign policy, we should appraise the costs and the benefits of each of these policies. That calculation can inform policy. But it cannot determine policy.

For a decision to move away from freer trade might be costly but nevertheless in the national interest. Once again we can turn to Adam Smith, no protectionist, he, for guidance. Smith argued that it might be appropriate to grant relief from foreign competition to industries that face a heavy burden of taxation, which today we can reasonably interpret to include the costs of environmental and other regulations in instances in which the costs of those regulations exceed their benefits.

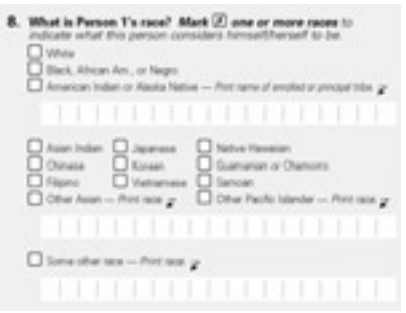
He argued, too, that national defense considerations—in the case of Britain the preservation of the large fleet on which its defense and ability to import necessities depended—make protection desirable. "Defence," he wrote, "is of much more importance than opulence."

And Smith even anticipated modern-day arguments that considerations of fairness justify retaliation "when some foreign nation restrains by high duties or prohibitions the importation of some of our manufactures into their country." Smith saw such retaliation as an instrument that just might induce the offending trading partner to mend its ways. And never mind the economist's argument that such a move is equivalent to shooting oneself in the foot by denying consumers access to the goods of the protection-minded country.

So freer trade is not an absolute good in all cases. It unquestionably adds to national wealth. But such enrichment is not a policy goal to be elevated above all others. For there is more to a nation than its GDP. When our then-minister to the French Republic, Charles Pinckney, said that we as a nation are prepared to pay millions for defense but not one cent for tribute, he was telling his countrymen that the economist's cost/benefit computations are at times quite properly trumped by considerations of national interest and pride. He was right two hundred years ago, and the policy he enunciated remains right today. The national interest has as a component, and an important component, the maximization of the wealth of the nation. And freer trade, an important contributor to the increase in that wealth, is worth fighting for in the vast majority of cases. But, like all other policies, it is best seen as only a part, albeit an important part, of a variety of policies designed to secure our national interest. ♦

To Diversity and Beyond

The new Census manufactures minorities. BY AMITAI ETZIONI



EVEN AMERICANS who don't care squat about abstractions such as "race relations" might well be infuriated to learn that—under an order issued by the Clinton White House, which George W. Bush could yet rescind—the U.S. Census is following a deep South tradition: Americans who check both "black" and "white" race boxes on their Census forms are to be counted as 100 percent black. (Other regimes that have followed essentially this system of racial classification are South Africa under Apartheid and Nazi Germany.)

Here's how it works: On their 2000 Census forms Americans were afforded the opportunity to opt out of narrow racial pigeonholes by claiming more than one race. That left the question of how to count such Americans in summary statistics. The Census could have simply reported that X million Americans see themselves as multiracial. But that would have diminished the numbers of minorities, statistics used in plans for school desegregation and in regulatory programs and the allocation of government funds for housing, employment, health, and the environment.

As representative Carrie Meek, a Florida Democrat, explained, "The 'multiracial' category would cloud the count of discrete minorities who are assigned to a lower track in public schools, . . . kept out of certain occupations, and whose progress toward seniority or promotion has been skewered." This is the reason several African-American groups, such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, campaigned to urge blacks to mark only one box on their Census forms, as they have a perfect right to do. A $1.1 million advertising campaign in California took as its slogan "Check the Black Box." Despite this campaign, some 1.76 million people checked "black" and a second race.

Take Tiger Woods. While I have no idea how he actually marked his Census form, Woods has often refused to be racially boxed in. "Growing up, I came up with this name: I'm a 'Cablinasian,'" he has said, reflecting his Caucasian, black, American Indian, and Thai roots. Woods and millions more Americans are children of intermarriages. But those who favor identity politics—and the privileges that go with "minority" status—are not to be stopped.

Their first move was to rearrange the data collected by the 1990 Census. This had included the race category "Other," which 9.8 million Americans had chosen. In compiling something called the Modified Age/Race/Sex (MARS) profile, provided to various federal agencies for purposes of allocating funds, the Census dropped "Others" and divided up the 9.8 million people among the racial groups. Next, for the 2000 Census, the bureau abolished the race-neutral "Others" altogether and forced Americans to name their race, although it allowed them to choose more than one.

As a final blow, in a memo known as OMB Bulletin No. 00-02 issued in March 2000, the Clinton White House ordered that all who checked "white" but who also marked another racial category be counted as minorities, at least for purposes of civil rights enforcement.

At issue is how we view ourselves as a nation, and what kind of a society we envision America's becoming. Is it one in which the lines between the races are gradually blurred, as the number of Americans of mixed parentage increases and identity politics retreats? Or is it one in which bright lines differentiating Americans by race are jealously guarded, and those who seek to have a foot in two or more social camps are frowned upon—as Tiger Woods was scolded by Colin Powell for not owning up to his blackness?

I, for one, look toward an American society that increasingly resembles Hawaii, a place rich in blended citizens. In such a country, more and more people would look like the computer composite of a future American featured on a cover of *Time* magazine several years ago. That composite incorporated characteristics of several races: almond-shaped eyes, a mop of straight, dark hair, and honey-colored skin. Surrounded by such fellow citizens, we would realize that many of our differences are skin deep; that ultimately we all want a free country that respects individual rights, good jobs and a fine education for our children, cleaner politics—and less racial tension.

I am not opposed to helping African Americans compete on an equal footing in the marketplace and elsewhere. However, we should not accomplish this by manipulating national statistics or forcing on people a racial identity they have declined to choose for themselves even though by doing so they forfeit government help.

Changes in our demographic and social categories would help us recognize the full importance of my favorite African-American saying: We came in many ships, but now we ride in the same boat. ♦

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Everett Collection

The New Army

Be whatever you want to be

BY MATT LABASH

Columbus, Georgia

The strip that runs outside Ft. Benning, Home of the Infantry, is called "Victory Drive." The soldiers call it "V.D. Drive," a reminder of what one stands to catch from spending too much time off-post. Among the chicken'n'shrimp shacks and no-tell motels, you see tomorrow's warfighters, or, as they're now called, peacekeepers, frequenting Tattoo Tommy's and Ranger Rags military surplus and, on weekends, dropping into the Lucky 7 Lounge to enjoy the dance stylings of Brandi and Flame and Raven. Amidst all the low-rent squalor is a strip mall that houses Army, Navy, and Air Force recruiting stations. Their offices are scattered among a Jazzy Girlz exotic dancewear retailer and a plus-size lingerie shop. At first, the juxtaposition seems a sad joke. But on second thought, the strip-mall occupants seem to have plenty in common: They're not afraid to abase themselves with cheap sales pitches, and they're desperate to appear sexy.

Of all the services, the Army is the most desperate. Recruiting has not been easy in recent years, and though there are any number of plausible explanations—from the end of the Cold War and declining defense spending, to the soaring economy of the 1990s—the deeper one, everyone seems to agree, is that the Army is suffering from an identity crisis. In true bureaucratic fashion, the Army seems to have concluded that it is simultaneously too tough and too soft.

Matt Labash is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

What to do? Reinvent yourself. In the new Army, training is easier and friendlier, but they pretend everyone is a warrior. Thus the decision of the Army chief of staff, Gen. Eric Shinseki, to appropriate the black beret of the elite Army Rangers in order to share it with the rest of the troops, even the "desk molesters" in Ranger-speak. Thus the new slogan and recruiting campaign, the colossally unpopular "Army of One." And thus the invention of programs like the one I traveled down to Ft. Benning to witness, in which non-combat lieutenants, men and women, are being rotated through infantry officer training, ostensibly to inject them with warrior spirit.

Anyone who subscribes to Elaine Donnelly's Center for Military Readiness newsletter can give you a convincing disquisition on how the last decade saw Bill Clinton and his civilian appointees turn the Army into a Nerf version of its former self. From the assistant secretary Sara Lister, who was run out of town for calling Marines "extremist," to former Army secretary Togo West, who launched programs like COO ("Consideration of Others Training"), the leadership saw to it that troops were sensitized as often as they got haircuts. And as recruiting got harder (the Army missed its goal three out of the last five years), the culture grew softer. Even former defense secretary William Cohen—whose military career consisted of one day in ROTC—admitted that coed basic training lacked rigor. Meanwhile, after downsizing from 18 to 10 divisions, money is still scarce. As one angry Ranger tells me, "Because you have no money, you can't train, can't go on deployments, can't even afford to buy bullets. But because you have no money, you have plenty of time to do more Consideration of Others Training—because we've got to feel good about things. Hey, you know something?" he thunders. "The time for feeling good is over. We've got problems."

As recruiting got harder (the Army missed its goal three out of the last five years), the culture grew softer.

It's enough to make you pity Army recruiters, who despite resorting to $20,000 enlistment bonuses and free Pentium laptops have been experiencing what marketing types call brand erosion. This is why departed Army secretary Louis Caldera, as his last official act in January, unveiled the new recruiting campaign "An Army of One." Though the Army's 20-year-old self-actualizing paean "Be All That You Can Be" was ranked by *Advertising Age* as the second most memorable jingle of the century (less popular than McDonald's "You deserve a break today," more popular than Brylcreem's "A little dab'll do ya"), the slogan had long ago stopped attracting new recruits.

Two years ago, when Caldera first expressed his intent to cashier the old slogan, he criticized "Be All That You Can Be" for being "about you personally, as opposed to serving your country." His was a spot-on critique of a pervasive military recruiting bias. Save for the few and proud Marines, who, even in a bullish economy, have met their recruiting goals for 56 straight months by selling courage and fierceness (Marine recruiting stations feature chin-up bars on which recruits can test themselves), the services have skimped on the duty-honor-country sales pitch in order to push everything from 30-day vacations to discount shopping at the commissary.

Ironically, Caldera's solution seems to compound the old slogan's selfishness quotient, without retaining much of its gung-ho élan. Caldera, of course, had plenty of help. The "Army of One" campaign is the product of a spate of research, everything from an Army-commissioned RAND Corporation study to focus groups conducted by the service's new blue-chip advertising firm, Leo Burnett, which interviewed over 500 youths to find out their perceptions of Army life.

After coaxing and cataloguing the Ritalin generation's perceptions, the prognosis wasn't good. The researchers, said Caldera, "told us we didn't have an Army brand." Sure, the Army had won two World Wars, solidifying our country's status as a superpower and insuring an era of unprecedented prosperity—but what has it done for us lately? The 18-24-year-old target demographic, which bears close resemblance to viewers of the WB network (where the Army of One now advertises), thought of the Army as a cold, faceless institution, filled with barking drill sergeants and other authoritarians who, like, tell you to wake up early and stuff. Worse still, the Army doesn't allow you to express your individuality. It is, in the words of the Leo Burnett gurus, seen as something that "depowers" rather than "empowers."

As a result of such research, faster than you could say "*Yo soy el Army*" (or "I am the Army," the Spanish-language version of the ads), Caldera became the caricature he had once criticized. At the January 10 roll-out, he was no longer singing the song of selfless service, but telling reporters that kids "want to know, 'How does the Army benefit me as an individual today?'"

With a budget of $150 million, the Army's new ad cam-

paign has received unprecedented exposure. When George Orwell noted that "We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm," he probably had no inkling that such ruffians could be rounded up with ads run in the likes of *Seventeen* magazine. But there are, as the campaign reminds us, "212 ways to be a soldier"—aside from the dreary business of killing people and breaking things. The new Army of One is, in fact, an Army of Fun. As Elaine Donnelly noted, while the Marines website expresses traditional militaristic sentiments such as "One must first be stripped clean. Freed of all false notions of self," the Army's website has a "cool stuff" link, where you can paint tanks, missiles, and other cool stuff in your choice of festive colors.

While there are several television spots, the most visible shows a corporal Richard Lovett, slogging all by his lonesome through the desert with flashing dog tags (an excellent way to attract sniper fire) as his troops head in the opposite direction. It's not clear if he's going AWOL or about to make a kamikaze charge. But the voiceover intones "Even though there are 1,045,690 soldiers just like me, I am my own force. . . . And I'll be the first to tell you, the might of the U.S. Army doesn't lie in numbers. It lies in me."

If the Ft. Jackson video is any guide, we'd better hope that tomorrow's enemy is more nurturing than the North Vietnamese.

Active-duty soldiers have decried the new campaign as being antithetical to everything they've had instilled in them since basic training: cohesion, teamwork, subordination of selfish interests to accomplishing the mission. In *Army Times* forums, soldiers almost universally pan the new campaign, going so far as to suggest replacement slogans like "Be a Man, Join the Marines!" Meanwhile, an *Army Times* focus group with Virginia teenagers found they largely "got" the new campaign, though one sophomore grew skittish watching Lovett haul his heavy rucksack across the desert: "I just think it's way too physical," he said.

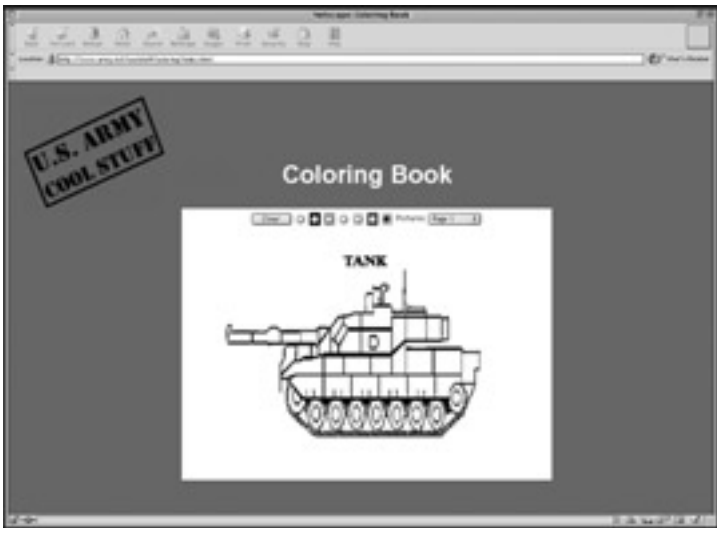
Army brass brush aside such criticism, saying they're not trying to appeal to active-duty soldiers. As a measure of their success, they point to the exponential spike in traffic to their *goarmy.com* website, where curious prospects can watch "webisodes" of "real" people going through "real" basic training at Ft. Jackson, S.C. (coed training that has reputedly gone so soft that critics now call it "Camp Jackson"). The webisodes, it turns out, are sillier than the ads. Trainees are informed the only way they'll flunk the run is if they walk; they are coddled while awaiting inoculations. A drill sergeant, hoping to allay the fears of recruits who've endured too many *Full Metal Jacket* viewings, tells the camera, "We believe that it's okay for soldiers to have fun."

But while the website's traffic has surged, there's no evidence of an influx of recruits. When I call Col. Kevin Kelley of the recruiting command at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, he admits that this year, compared to the same three-month time period last year, has actually seen 200 fewer recruits. Maybe this is attributable in part to critics, both liberal and conservative, who have savaged the campaign for selling recruits a bill of goods—that the Army will reshape its ethos to conform to lax contemporary mores. These critics, however, have it exactly backwards. The campaign is scandalous not because the Army is falsely indicating that it will change, but because it is truthfully advertising that it already has.

No better evidence of this exists than a recruiting tape I secured from Ft. Jackson, which predates the Army of One campaign. The tape is intended to disabuse recruits of the notion that drill sergeants are bellicose, authoritarian figures. One two-star major general featured in the video says the Army's old message was (sternly crossing his arms), "Prove to us that you're good enough to be a soldier and we'll let you in our Army." The new message, apparently, is we want you in our Army even if you have no business being here. The video features people that look a bit like drill sergeants (they still wear the Smokey Bear campaign hats), but not like any you've seen in the movies. One doughy, Ranger-Rick looking fellow wears thick glasses and is about 15 pounds overweight. He tells us that "the days of overbearing abusive drill sergeants are long gone," as drill sergeants are now "committed to [recruits'] success." Sounding like a bad telemarketer, he adds, "Basic combat training is a positive experience that I am proud to be associated with."

In another scene, a muscled, barking drill sergeant is following a frail recruit through the obstacle course (now called the "confidence course"). In the old Army, basic training was intended not only to transform civilians into soldiers, but to replicate, on a diminished scale, the stresses of combat. Those stresses were channeled in the form of the vociferous, semi-abusive drill sergeant. But if the Ft. Jackson video is any indication, we'd better hope that tomorrow's enemy is more nurturing than the Nazis or North Vietnamese. Because on the confidence course, the steaming, spitting wall of menace wearing the Smokey hat is no longer screaming epithets or reprimands. Instead, he yells at the recruit, "I'm gonna take care of you! If you don't give up on yourself, I won't give up on you!"

Like most Army inanity, this strain can be traced to a black-and-white directive. As Stephanie Gutmann shows in her recent book *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, TRADOC 350-6 (the Training and Doctrine Command's policy for initial entry training) is a recipe for handcuffing drill sergeants. Not only must every soldier be treated with "dignity and respect" (trainees must now be called soldier), but any activity that is "humiliating, oppressive, demeaning or harmful" is banned. Hemingway once said, "War is a crime. Ask the infantry and ask the dead." TRADOC says, "stress should be positive and oriented toward attainable goals."



"Cool stuff" from the Army website, www.army.mil/coolstuff/coloring/index.html

It's enough to rankle the likes of John Hillen, a defense analyst who took leave of the Army around the time the Army started taking leave of its senses. "In their clumsy, hackneyed way," he says, the Army continually "falls all over themselves to show they're just like IBM in different uniforms." After a decade or so of leadership that came of age in post-Vietnam America—the scorned-puppy era of soldiering—Hillen says, "There's very few [leaders left who] will say, 'Hell, yeah, I'm different, and if you can't cut it, you can't serve your nation and work for me.' That's the message the Marines get. But the Army message is 'Gosh, I'm sure there's a convenient meeting point halfway. We're not gonna stress you out too much, but it's gonna be a little different from high school—we'll pay you for instance!'"

Even other services have taken to ridiculing the Army. When I visited the Navy recruiting station off V.D. Drive, a burly recruiter giggled until his shoulders shook. "Army of one what?" he asked. "Those who are in it for honor and killing people join the Marines. If you wanna see the world, and have a sense of adventure, you join the Navy." And who's joining the Army? The recruiter grins, referring me to a recent announcement that the Army might start recruiting high school dropouts. "The people the Air Force and Navy won't take," he says.

On a sleepy, sunny morning out in the pine barrens of Ft. Benning, I am standing in a hangar among men any service would be honored to claim. The Army's 4th Ranger Training Battalion is producing some of the military's fiercest warfighters, who possess the strut that comes from internalizing the Ranger creed: "A more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle, by land, sea, or air. . . . My country expects me to move farther, faster and fight harder than any other soldier."

As they strap on their jump gear and apply their warpaint, there is little whooping or showboating. Instead the Rangers go about their business with quiet confidence, as if every workadaddy in America spends his Saturday morning waking up, downing coffee, then stepping off a C-140 to drop 1,300 feet onto the Alabama side of the Chattahoochee River. Since the mid-1970s, the Rangers' distinguishing symbol when in garrison has been the black beret. While Airborne wore maroon berets and Special Forces green, the black beret for three decades has been the Rangers' alone.

To those outside the brotherhood, it may seem a silly hat. But it is part of the reward system that is the coin of the realm in what author and former Navy secretary James Webb calls "the socialist meritocracy" that is the military. Hillen explains it like this: "Your average Ranger makes about one-third what a dental assistant makes, under a lot worse conditions. But for that sacrifice, you're supposed to get the berets, the ribbons, the greater glory, and the nation's profound gratitude. We don't shower accolades on the REMFs [rear echelon m— f—]. That's how you get paid; your lid is your payment. But if everybody gets one—what the hell? I might as well be a dental assistant and sleep in a bed every night. This is the bargain, the contract, the covenant between you and your country. And now, with the dumbing down of martial qualities in the military, the covenant is being violated."

In no instance more so than with Army chief of staff Eric Shinseki's announcement last October. To boost morale and to signify the transformation of the Army into a lighter, more lethal fighting force, the entire Army—even the desk molesters, he decided—were now going to wear the black beret. To add insult, Shinseki's deadline of June 14 (the anniversary of the Army's founding) meant that American manufacturers couldn't meet demand, so the berets would be manufactured in part by factories in China.

The blowback was fierce. Retired Rangers marched to

Washington and filled the Internet with flame. A bipartisan outcry went up on the Hill; Dan Burton promised hearings into the Chinese connection; George W. Bush threw chin music to Shinseki, indicating he should rethink his decision. But hardly a peep was heard from active-duty Rangers—partly because a gag order was issued by their commanders, partly because they are good soldiers. As one told me: "If the chief of staff told me to wear a clown hat, that's what I'm gonna wear."

The matter seems to have been settled in March when their regimental commander, Col. P.K. Keen, announced that the Rangers would gladly switch from their traditional black to a new, tan beret. Says a civilian source with knowledge of the delicate negotiations, "The Army called and begged Keen to save their butts. He could've stayed out of it and let them get decapitated. Or he could do what Rangers do, step in front of a bullet intended for Shinseki."

As a result, Sgt. Major Jack Tilley, the highest-ranking enlisted man in the Army, has announced that new battalions of black beret wearers, instead of possessing near heroic warfighting capabilities, or enduring grueling, year-long training regimens, will merely have to pass a "rites of passage" test. What the test entails isn't clear. When I called Tilley's spokesman, Master Sgt. David Schad, he said it will include a written test on the history of the Army and "likely more," though he's not exactly sure what. When asked what will happen if soldiers don't pass the test, he says, "They'll be re-tested." And if they don't pass the re-test? "We're not talking about graduate-school level sorts of things," he says.

Talking to the Rangers at the Saturday morning jump, with a public affairs shadow on my arm, I hear mostly affected nonchalance over the beret controversy. "We'll be proud as always," shrugs Raphael Colondres, Command Sgt. Major of the 4th Ranger Training Battalion. "It's not in a piece of cloth," he says, pounding his chest. "It's what's in here." But given the cover of anonymity ("Don't use my name, they'll send me to Korea"), other Rangers seethe.

While Shinseki is willing to spend $26.6 million on feel-good hats, the Army is coming off at the wheels. As the *Washington Times*'s Rowan Scarborough discovered in a leaked memo, 12 of the Army's 20 combat schools were graded as being at the lowest possible readiness levels. Ft. Benning, like most bases, is a wheezing ghost of its former self. In the base's shabby Infantry Hall, tiles periodically pop off the ceiling, and employees bring in vacuums from home because they can't afford the janitorial service enjoyed by third-tier elementary schools. Even the elite Rangers get enlisted into self-help construction projects for which they use their own tools. For their troubles, they're rewarded at "excellence ceremonies"—with commemorative coasters. "Quite honestly," says one, "we're broke."

Another active-duty Ranger, who meets me off-base, resembles Orwell's fabled rough men, a cinder block on legs with a high-and-tight haircut. Like many Rangers, he is upset over the berets. "You don't stick hats and badges and all this crap on people. The way you make people better is you force them to become better. You put them in situations that are hard and tough." While the Rangers haven't engaged in public debate, the source says of his buddies, "They earned this thing. They fought for it on the beaches of Normandy, through the jungles of Burma, and here we're ready to give it . . . to Joe E. Bagofdonuts. That hat means lives." Shinseki's beret directive, says the Ranger, is symptomatic of a larger breakdown of the warrior culture. Call it warrior-norming, where tip-of-the-spear soldiers are devalued, and their lessers are elevated to equal status. "We get these kids now that say, Sergeant, you can't do this, it's against my rights. . . . This garbage has got to stop. You take a hood ornament off a Cadillac and put it on a Pinto, it's still a Pinto."

Though the "Army of One" and beret flaps have caused great consternation, a quieter, more alarming experiment is being conducted at Ft. Benning's infantry officer training. The Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC) is one of the Army's most important, training lieutenants with little experience to lead platoons in combat. (Not for nothing do seasoned platoon sergeants say, "There's nothing more dangerous than a 2nd Lieutenant.") Ft. Benning, which is also the home of Airborne and Ranger schools, provides what's generally considered the most rigorous training in the Army. Benning's combat-arms status means women, prohibited from serving in the infantry, aren't around to prompt the relaxing of standards that the rest of the Army has seen since basic training went coed in 1993.

But the Army's Training and Doctrine Command has nonetheless selected Ft. Benning for the incubation of another hare-brained scheme. At first blush, it seems harmless. TRADOC has decided to carve out the first 7 weeks of the 17-week Infantry Officer Basic Course and call it the Basic Officer Leader Course. In this "pilot program" (which one high-placed source assures is "not just a test, it's the future"), non-infantry soldiers, everyone from quartermasters to finance officers, including women, will mix it up with infantry officers. After seven weeks, non-infantry types will take off to their other military occupational specialty schools, with infantry officers resuming IOBC. In the meantime, the non-groundpounders will supposedly pick up leadership qualities, get shot full of hooah, and happily develop into the new "Army of One."

It could be argued that it's not a bad thing for combat-

support types to be introduced to those they're supporting, in the hopes that the warrior ethos will rub off before they return to molesting desks. But that neglects a more important consideration: Does learning to play with others for 7 weeks in an already packed 17-week schedule compromise the training of future combat leaders?

There was an early indication that the answer is yes even in the planning stage of my visit. I arranged to drop in during the middle of the seven-week course to witness some of the more dynamic exercises, such as the bayonet assault and water confidence courses. But the night before I left, my assigned public affairs officer (PAO) informed me that the training cadre had cancelled both events. "Why?" I asked. "Because of rain," she said. (Both days ended up cloud-free.)

Entering the Infantry Officer Basic Course headquarters, my PAO in tow, I meet the man in charge, Lt. Col. John Carothers, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment. Carothers asks me to join him at his office conference table, and immediately he proves likeable, with a lopey, laconic gait that belies his slightly menacing George C. Scott-ish mien. His office walls are decorated not only with the Infantry Leader's Prayer, but with sabers and machetes and other instruments of death, picked up in far-flung places like Panama, where Carothers also picked up a Bronze Star during Operation Just Cause.

An Army of One? Infantry officers training at Fort Benning

A career infantryman who sports a Ranger tab, Carothers has been in command for a little over a month, and he's been tasked with executing TRADOC's pilot program (scheduled to be fully operational next year). If he's not 100 percent supportive of the program, he sure does a masterful impression—an impression most officers are adept at when conducting interviews with public affairs officers weighing their every statement. In fact, with all the blinking and awkward pauses, the entire exercise can make the interviewer feel as if he's dropped into an interactive hostage video. When I ask the colonel if there's a danger of training being softened to accommodate non-infantry officers, my PAO interjects before Carothers can answer. The first seven weeks "are more elementary skills," she says. "It was explained to me as crawl, walk, run." Carothers grins: "We'll definitely be crawling," he says. "That doesn't mean a standard's being diminished," she helpfully offers. Sure doesn't, agrees Carothers. But when asked what those standards are, he concedes, "We're experimenting with what the standards are going to be. For this test, we're not gonna fail anybody."

Carothers admits Army training involves a bit more hand-holding these days. "When I came in" in 1983, he says, "my leaders told me, you take one in the chest, you're gone tomorrow, there'll be somebody to replace you. I accepted that. I'm a professional fighting man." Carothers, in fact, seems almost nostalgic for his Ranger school trainers, who woke him up at 4 A.M., turned over wall lockers, and made him file outside undressed as they kicked rocks and screamed at him. "It tickled the heck out of me," he says, offering that though the Army does decidedly less of this today ("We're getting smarter"), he had wanted it tough. "I think that's what the kids want. And sometimes we turn them off with some of the what-do-you-want, do you want an Army of One?"

For a moment, Carothers seems to be careening toward the electrified perimeter of the Army reservation, but he makes a nice recovery. "I think [this program] is gonna pull the Army together—Army of One, all wearing the same hats, see how it comes together," he says with hostage-video timing. "I honestly believe this program is gonna be awesome."

Perhaps so, but what I observe over the next few days would be enough to give any hardened combat leader pause. For one, a high-placed source tells me that the Army Research Institute is monitoring the program at TRADOC's behest and will make recommendations to "make the course more beneficial" to non-infantry officers. This can only mean less training critical to infantry platoon leaders and more generic "leadership" training. For another, women, who've historically been forbidden to serve in the infantry, are present not only as students (13 in this cycle) but as instructors who by definition have no infantry experience.

The result is a PAO's nightmare. At the base pool one evening, the newly gender-integrated Charlie Company lieutenants who have failed the combat water survival test (a series of swimming exercises done in full gear) have turned out for remedial swimming. Soldiers are required to show up in their swimtrunks, before taking up floaties and kickboards and whatever else they need to help them stay above water. The trainers of Charlie Company, who

include Capt. Elizabeth Smith (on loan from Ft. Bliss), are horsing around. One flirtatious male sergeant questions Smith's choice of blue toenail polish. "They match my shorts," she exclaims.

As the cadre play verbal footsie, students arrive late, as casually as if they'd only missed the cucumber sandwiches at a ladies' tea. But there is no yelling and no demand for push-ups. After all, as I'm repeatedly told, this is an officer's course, a "gentleman's course." As the non-swimmers file into the shallow end of the pool, a male cadre member explains that female trainers are here to help male infantry trainers understand the fairer sex. "For example," Capt. Smith joins in, "issues may arise. Last week, we held guys up under their bodies to try to get them to swim. It may be an awkward situation for a guy to do that to a female or for a female having a guy do that to her. So they just bring us in and make it a little bit easier."

Such situations are commonplace in a coed platoon, which is why Carothers won't even entertain the notion that Army brass may be experimenting with an incremental approach to working women into the infantry. "I just can't believe there's a conspiracy out there to emasculate the infantry," Carothers says dismissively. "It's too important, what we do."

After Capt. Smith has explained the new leadership dynamic, another uncomfortable situation arises poolside. A female lieutenant announces she is having her period, and is unsure if she should participate in remedial swimming. One of the lifeguards approaches a knot of cadre, saying, "If a female is on her period, she can't get in the water, right?" "Why not?" I ask. "Because of bleeding and AIDS?" he offers, asking as much as informing. "I want her in the pool," says Smith, who possesses a robust big-sister femininity, no-nonsense enough to make her male counterparts like her, feline enough to make them think she's a hottie.

Lifeguards and cadre go scrambling for a black binder filled with OSHA regulations. They hash out the possible downsides of blood in the water. They consult the unhelpful, six-inch thick book of regs. Smith finally wins the argument, and the lieutenant gets in the pool. The lifeguards seem confused. The lieutenant seems disappointed. The cadre seem unconcerned, as one male sergeant ambles up to Smith, noting the low-cut back of her swimsuit. "Is that a tan line?" he inquires. "It's none of your business," she exclaims brusquely. "Why do you ask?" she says, this time more gently.

Approaching another male cadre member, I ask him to give me his take on the good order and discipline of the mixed-specialties Charlie Company. "Be politically correct," one of his fellow trainers warn. When asked his name, he says, "I don't have a name sir, I'm a ghost." I ask him what differences he sees in this new form of infantry officer training. "We're not chewing their asses," he says. "There's a lot of people holding back, trying to lay off the cuss words and not say something that might get us in trouble." Is this a unifying, morale-building exercise? "The soft skills pretty much know right now that no matter what they do, they're gonna pass the course. But for [infantry officers], there's a standard. When we say, 'Soft skills, there's no standard for you, but infantry has to pass with this,' morale is let down."

A few days later during morning PT (physical training), 3rd platoon has taken the field in their knit hats and sweatsuits for rigorous intervals of timed push-ups that Capt. Smith calls "Bulgarian bursts." "Did she say ovarian bursts?" asks one female lieutenant. As the troops do push-ups in rapid 30-second cycles, one of the females has called it quits. She lies flat on her belly, barely nodding her head. "These are modified push-ups," she explains, employing the verbiage of the Army's PT double standards. "Yeah," says a disgusted infantryman, "it's called 'not doing them.'"

A little later, the lieutenants are lined up to do sprints. When one soldier jumps the gun, platoon Sgt. Jim Litchford explodes, "Get your a—" but he doesn't finish his thought. A 15-year veteran, Litchford is called "Old Army" by some students, but he offers a feeble "Get back there" to the stray lieutenant. "Give me a push-up," he says for good measure.

"A push-up?" I later ask Litchford, incredulous. I tell him that, though I'm no triathlete, I've had tougher football coaches. In fact, I've had tougher tennis coaches. The clearly agitated staff sergeant's jaw muscles pulsate, as if to suggest I don't know the half of it. But he explains how the new system works: "I think a lot of cadre feel like they're walking on eggshells, trying to keep from hurting [trainees'] feelings." Litchford says the only tool he's permitted to use to get trainees' attention, even when they engage in eye-rolling insubordination, is "counseling."

After PT, Lt. LaToya Porter, serving a two-day rotation as a student platoon leader, is stressed to her gills. Looking confused and asking questions of cadre in hushed tones, she has forgotten to inform her platoon of the packing list for an extended bivouac, for which they are supposed to leave in just two hours. It's a fairly significant lapse, and as the platoon falls out of formation, a prior-service lieutenant who served in Special Forces calls the platoon together for a profanity-laced group ass-chewing that the cadre, walking away resignedly, seems unable to give. Sensing he may have gone overboard, he tempers his tongue-lashing with, "I don't mean to step on anyone's dick—or whatever you got out there." "Hey!" says one female lieutenant in protest.

As the platoon heads back to their barracks to collect their gear for the three-day deployment, I make the acquaintance of Lt. John Prine, who spent 10 years as an enlisted man before going to Officer Candidate School and whose experience extends back to Desert Storm. Prine has an idea of what infantry training should look like. And as I follow him back to his room, where he offers a breakfast-choice of Pepsi One or Busch beer while taking a pinch of Copenhagen and medicating his socks with Gold Bond powder, Prine eviscerates the new program.

The course, thus far, he says, has been what Snuffy Joes like him call a "C.F." (cluster f—). When he went through enlisted basic a decade ago, he thought the strap on his helmet was "just for the drill sergeant to grab. Now, they can't even curse at you. It's too laid back, there's not a consequence behind screwing up." Prine's platoon-mate, Lt. Michael Trujillo, who also has prior service, adds, "As an infantry officer, you've got to be pretty tough, pretty bad-ass. It's a challenging job, and if somebody's gonna die, you're gonna be responsible."

Both men catalog a litany of exceptions that wouldn't be tolerated in regular infantry officers' training—they hope: bringing the troops in from bivouacs because of rain; allowing them to bring extra possessions to stash in a group duffel bag instead of limiting them to what they can haul in their ruck; timid cadre delegating disciplinary authority to assertive students; nearly non-existent PT ("I'm in worse shape than before I came here," says Prine).

"It's hurting the infantry soldiers. It's taking seven weeks out of our training," Prine adds, echoing sentiments I hear repeatedly from students and cadre who say that most infantry skills touched upon in the seven weeks will have to be revisited. "The cadre's hands are tied," says Prine, defending the one-push-up demands of Sgt. Litchford. "They don't want too many bad after-action reviews [in which the students offer written comments about trainers]. These people bitch about stupid shit. They write 'Sgt. Litchford hurt my feelings when he yelled at me.'"

Consequently, says Prine, "Every time we do something, we have one of the cadre explaining why they acted a certain way, did they get on us at all, if so, they're sorry, take it as constructive—all this touchy-feely, stroke-your-feathers, making-you-feel-worthwhile. We had an after-action review Tuesday night, and I said, 'I really don't give a damn why you're doing this. I'm here to be trained. You chew my ass, I screwed up, I'm not going to do it again. You stroke my feathers, and it's not that big of an ordeal. F— all this wasting time . . . telling me where you're coming from. I don't give a damn. Train me! Let's go—we just wasted two hours talking about it.'"

I remind Prine that this is supposed to be a "gentleman's course." "If I wanted a gentleman's course," says Prine, "I would've accepted a medical commission and been out on the golf course by noon everyday." Just then, his phone rings. It's Lt. Porter, still stressed from that morning's meltdown. Prine sounds as if he's talking her off a ledge: "You're doing good. . . . You're not ate up. . . . Got a long day. . . . Take a shower. Relax. Put your hair up." Prine suggests we move out to the next formation. We're already five minutes late, but he asks me to count how many of his 33-member platoon I see assembled. Thirteen, I reply. "Pretty scary, huh?" he says.

The sergeant offers a feeble "Get back there" to the stray lieutenant. "Give me a push-up," he says for good measure.

By the time I leave Benning, I have worked Lt. Col. Carothers over for hours, but haven't moved him off his willfully naive statement of faith, "I believe the Army line." As we tear down the base's red clay trails in his Jeep, off to a grenade range not unlike one where he once caught shrapnel in his knee, Carothers flawlessly applies camo-paint to his face without benefit of a mirror. The discussion we've taken up is general Army readiness, which by all accounts is at record lows. After getting pushed a little more, Carothers finally breaks character. Perhaps he is tired of not speaking his mind, or perhaps he is fatigued by a creampuff civilian reporter trying to sound like some high priest of hooah. Whatever the case, his eyes grow fiery, his back stiffens, and his words come out with a steely evenness, at once comforting and unnerving:

"I know what right looks like, and right now ain't right. Historically, the American people are ready to pay for non-readiness with the blood of their children. They aren't willing to fork out the bucks for a large standing Army that'll do the things they want us to do, and that's gonna cost them their sons and daughters. But that's okay. If that's what they want, there's guys like me. I will go stand on the Bataan peninsula and fight. I'll stand in the Pusan perimeter without good weapons or squat for support. Guys like me, we're gonna stand, and we will not let the infantry erode. My philosophy is the men we train are gonna some day take my sons to an unfair fight."

No need to take them anywhere, Colonel. In the new Army, they're already in one. ♦

Race and the Republicans

There is nothing inevitable about black Americans' overwhelming support of Democrats. It just seems that way.

By Eric Cohen

Last February, a few days after a man from Indiana had fired several shots at the White House, I found myself driving a group of black fourth and fifth graders to the U.S. Capitol for a private tour. George W. Bush had just been inaugurated, so I asked the kids what they thought about their new president.

"When I heard about the shooting I was pretty happy," said one of the boys with a laugh. "I thought Bush might have got shot." Other comments were just as bitter, though the kids were too young really to know what they were saying:

"President Bush is going to put us all back in slavery."

"He's going to round up all the black people and kill them."

The kids were part of a reading and art program at a housing project in Northeast Washington, D.C.—a part of town long known to residents and local reporters as "Little Beirut." They were, for the most part, nice kids—affectionate and brash, used to hardship at home and mayhem on the streets, with little real experience of the "white" world that lies outside their all-black neighborhood.

President Bush spoke of these separate worlds in his inaugural address: "While many of our citizens prosper," he said, "others doubt the promise—even the justice—of our own country. . . . And sometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a continent, but not a country." Bush's commitment to "healing" the racial divide is by now beyond question. But so is the fear and loathing of Republicans among most blacks, young and old, rich and poor, religious and secular.

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To be sure, Democrats and the civil rights establishment have had their own problems of late: Jesse Jackson's personal and financial scandals; Sen. Robert Byrd's use of the term "white nigger"; the bloodfight between Terry McAuliffe (the white choice) and Maynard Jackson (the black choice) for the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee, followed by McAuliffe's use of the term "colored people" in one of his speeches; and, most significantly, the quandary over President Bush's faith-based initiative, which threatens to drive a wedge between the black civil rights establishment (allied as it is with the secular Left) and the black churches and church leaders with whom Bush hopes to work.

But none of these contretemps has changed anything politically. There has been virtually no backlash against Democrats for their insensitivities; even Democratic mayor Charlie Luken of riot-torn Cincinnati seems to be getting a political pass—by contrast with, say, mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York after the Amadou Diallo shooting—while the Cincinnati police force comes under heavy fire from black leaders for the fatal shooting of a black suspect.

It is far too early to tell whether President Bush's "compassionate conservative" agenda—his vigorous support for black churches, his talk of reforming inner-city schools, his deliberate sensitivity to issues like racial profiling, and (though he would never openly admit it) his race-conscious appointments to the highest posts in his administration—will break this political stalemate in the long run, defusing black animosity towards Republicans and even garnering black support. Four months does not a realignment make; the record in Texas, however, is not encouraging. After six years as governor, Bush won a paltry 5 percent of Texas blacks in the presidential race. Despite all of Bush's efforts at "inclusion," the dominant symbol of his young presidency for most blacks remains John Ashcroft, whose interview with *Southern Partisan* magazine and appearance at Bob Jones University were

easily exploited by Democrats to reinforce many blacks in the belief that Republicans are the moral equivalents of slaveholders.

Undaunted, Bush and his compassionate conservatives are determined to win the confidence of black Americans. They insist that religious, socially conservative blacks living in overtaxed cities are a natural Republican constituency. They believe that decades of liberal failure, especially in the public schools, make it possible to break black voters' near unanimous loyalty to the Democratic party. This is no mere political gambit, as civil rights leaders smugly claim; it is not the inverse of Nixon's "Southern Strategy." It reflects, rather, two decades of reflection on how to make Republicans the party of urban renewal, and it springs from the conviction that core conservative principles can address the problems of the black community—while decades of liberal policies and grievance politics have only made them worse.

Whatever promise it may hold for the future, Bush's overture to blacks faces two obstacles in the here and now. The first is Republicans' mistaken willingness to tolerate old forms of southern pride that border on bigotry. President Bush, to his credit, has made an effort to confront America's slaveholding past without giving in to "the soft bigotry of low expectations." But to his detriment, Bush, like most of his fellow candidates for the Republican nomination in 2000, remained agnostic about the Confederate flag—thus seeming to put calculation before principle and giving the Left a symbolic victory on race (which it tirelessly replayed during the Ashcroft fight).

The second is more fundamental: Republicans haven't decided whether or not race matters. They are torn between their philosophical commitment to color-blindness and the necessity they feel for deliberate outreach to blacks. They believe that race-based hiring and college admissions are wrong, yet they feel compelled to make sure that minorities are included in numerous and key positions in the administration. (For Democrats, there is no such ambivalence: They defend race-conscious policies like affirmative action, diversity hiring, and the racial gerrymandering of congressional districts in the name of fairness, suspending the principle of color-blindness in order to make up for past prejudice and ongoing discrimination.) The Republicans only compound their political problems when they tell the truth about the high incidence of black-on-black crime and illegitimacy and the racial achievement gap in school. They are left, in the end, with a whole repertoire of losing strategies: maintaining that race does not matter, when to most black Americans it does; equating blackness with social pathology; or trying to out-pander Democrats. Compassionate conservatives must find a way out of this maze if they are ever to win more than George W. Bush's dismal 9 percent of the national black vote.

A good starting point would be to admit that conservatives have been right to criticize the excesses and destructiveness of race-based thinking, but wrong to underestimate the enduring significance of being black in America. For the fact is that black America—with its history of slavery and freedom, segregation and civil rights, bigotry and courage—retains a special moral authority in the nation at large, even if militants and demagogues have so often abused this claim. America's greatest black leaders, from Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King Jr., spoke not just as Americans but as black Americans—with a long history of injustice behind their challenge to the nation's conscience. Even today, the most independent black thinkers, from Thomas Sowell to Shelby Steele, speak with a special courage, special voice, and special authority.

If compassionate conservatism could engage this black voice in the service of just ends—a role for religion in public life; school choice as a civil right; human rights, including the right to life of the unborn; families complete with fathers—it could significantly change American politics. Such a black-white compassionate-conservative alliance would not only address black problems with new vigor; it would invite blacks to address America's problems. It would treat blacks not just as the needy but as the needed. It would connect black identity with the moral life of America—and in the process expose the moral bankruptcy of the current black political establishment.

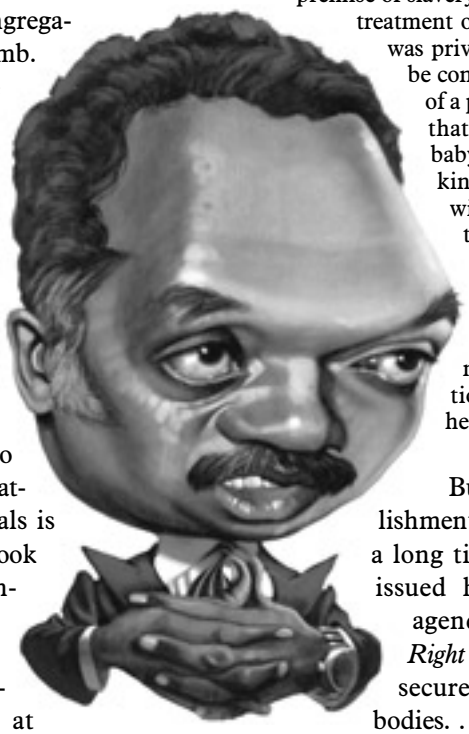
To advance this ambitious agenda, compassionate conservatism must be informed by a deeper grasp than most conservatives now have of how blacks understand themselves, of how race does matter, for better and worse. The church, as President Bush has realized, is a good place to start.

The Reverend Willie T. Lawson is the minister of Mount Paran Baptist Church, a black congregation in Southeast Washington, D.C. For two and a half hours one recent morning, he told me stories—about the sack he used for picking cotton when he was 5 years old, about his turn to God as a teenager, about his time in the army, about his views on abortion, the family, and the black crisis—each of which turned into a boom-

ing mini-sermon followed by an apology. Then Lawson said this:

"I think a lot of the problems of the inner city have to do with not knowing about our past, our real past, our struggles. I don't mean this in a racist way—we should not hate because we were oppressed. But we need to know. We need to know about the courage we once had. We need to get God back into our lives. I want to see our people fly with the eagles, not scratch with the chickens. And we can't do it with our pants hanging down around our hips on the street corner selling drugs. Government can't solve our problems, because if government could, God would be obsolete. The kids aren't going to do it themselves. We have to enlighten them, and that's where the church comes in."

That Sunday, Rev. Lawson preached a sermon entitled "Too Blessed to Be Depressed." It built like a volcano, punctuated every 30 seconds with "Amens" from the overwhelmingly female congregation: "God knew Jeremiah in the womb. He already loved him. And here we are talking about allowing partial-birth abortion." Amen. "Look at the blessings God has bestowed on us. He's taken us out of our own Egypt right here in America." Amen. "And we've got the nerve to shoot one another, to sell drugs to one another, to destroy one another." Amen. Amen. Amen.



What becomes clear is that if the conservative problem is the failure to take adequate account of how race matters, the potential problem for liberals is their failure to reflect the moral outlook of many of their loyal black constituents. The black America that dominates our national dialogue, it seems, has two cultures but one politics. One culture was represented at Mount Paran Baptist Church that Sunday. It is the culture of Rev. Lawson, deeply religious, largely female, pro-life, pro-school prayer, and pro-abstinence. The other culture is self-destructive, largely male, plagued by violence, drugs, rage, death, misogyny, and illegitimacy. It is the culture of Puffy Combs and Allen Iverson, of BET music videos and Al Sharpton riots.

The black political establishment appeals to the former's sense of justice, while justifying the latter's sins. It translates the personal morality of its churchgoing constituents into a political morality of grievances and payoffs. It denies, ignores, or deemphasizes grave problems of the black inner city, to preserve an undiluted politics of oppressor and oppressed—when in truth the present tragedy of many blacks has neither so obvious nor so intentional a cause as racism. But when it comes to voting, most blacks of all classes, however conservative on certain issues, still affirm this politics, perhaps because they see in it the only available affirmation of their black identity.

No issue better illustrates the corrupting legacy of this unprincipled politics than abortion. Consider the example of Jesse Jackson, circa 1977, articulating how the defenders of abortion end up adopting the slaveholder's logic:

> There are those who argue that the right to privacy is of [a] higher order than the right to life. . . . That was the premise of slavery. You could not protest the existence or treatment of slaves on the plantation because that was private and therefore outside your right to be concerned. . . . What happens to the mind of a person, and the moral fabric of a nation, that accepts the aborting of the life of a baby without a pang of conscience? What kind of a person and what kind of a society will we have 20 years hence if life can be taken so casually? It is that question, the question of our attitude, our value system, and our mindset with regard to the nature and worth of life itself that is the central question confronting mankind. Failure to answer that question affirmatively may leave us with a hell right here on earth.

But Jackson and the civil rights establishment abandoned this larger idea of justice a long time ago. In February 2001, Jackson issued his personal "10-point civil-rights agenda." Point No. 8 was: "*A Woman's Right to Self-Determination*. Women must be secure in their control of their own bodies. . . ." Of the 36 voting members of the Congressional Black Caucus, 29 had perfect pro-choice voting records in the 106th Congress; the other 7 had pro-choice records of 80 percent, 82 percent, 90 percent, 94 percent, 95 percent, 95 percent, and 95 percent.

And so here is the problem, in a nutshell: On this issue of great moral seriousness, where liberationist values conflict with Christian values, and political power conflicts with moral principle, the black establishment chooses autonomy and power. It enters a pan-liberal alliance with secular feminists and rejects the majority beliefs of the black community, which are Christian and pro-life. In so doing, black establishment leaders reveal

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

the hollowness of their idea of justice—since justice depends on honoring principles higher than power, duties higher than choice. Instead, they become the very thing they supposedly exist to oppose: people who put self-interest and convenience before what is right. That is what slaveholders did; that is what abortion is. And the person who consents to either of these evils—as Jesse Jackson once knew—consents to the slaveholder's creed of power, not principle.

On issue after issue, the black establishment has followed this pattern. On school choice, religion in public life, sexual morality, and the nature of the family, the black establishment has embraced power over principle, easy grandstanding over hard truths. And so, in the end, it betrays the best of its community and justifies the worst. It leads blacks nowhere.

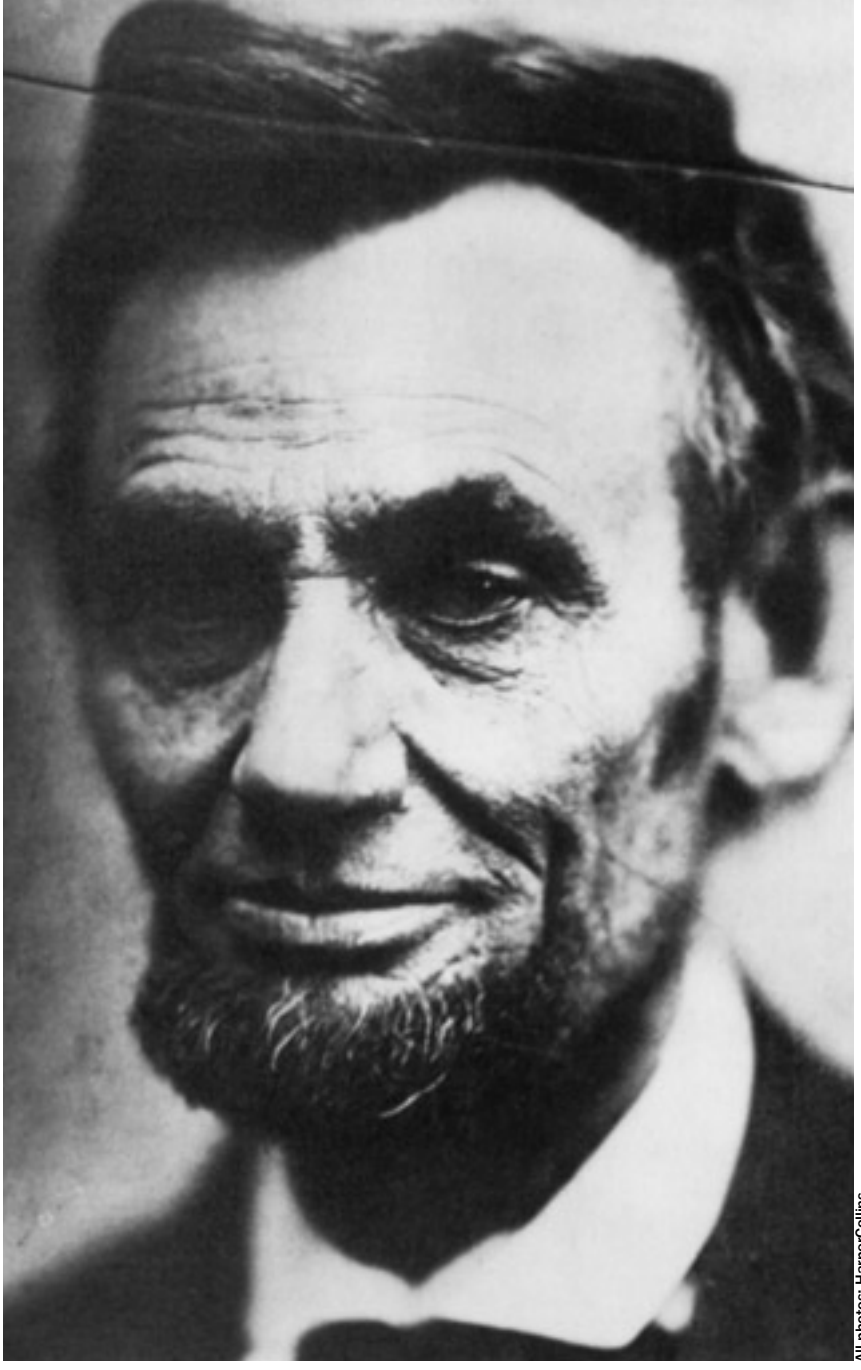
A conservative alternative is just beginning to take shape—one that combines realism about black problems with a new idea of compassion and an offer of alliance with black churches. But it cannot succeed unless Republicans can overcome the animosity with which much of the black community still regards them.

To this end, Republicans must do more than diagnose black problems and formulate conservative policies to address them. They must also find a way to connect black identity with conservatism's highest principles. They must make the case not simply that blacks need conservatives, but also that conservatives need blacks. This is not primarily a matter of winning votes—Republicans, after all, win elections with few black votes. It is a matter of enlisting blacks' unique moral authority on the social issues. Until conservatives understand this—and until more black leaders and citizens accept the burden of self-criticism where it is warranted, and the challenge of leading the nation as a whole, not just black America against white America—the racial stalemate will likely continue, with little gain to blacks, conservatives, or the country they share. ♦

The Quirks of History

The month the Civil War ended

By Terry Eastland



All photos: HarperCollins

The struggle at Gettysburg—where, over three days at the beginning of July 1863, the Union army turned back Robert E. Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania—remains the best-known battle of the Civil War. But Gettysburg didn't end things. The Civil War continued for two more years, and it is April 1865, the last month of real fighting, that Jay Winik contends is the most important month in American history. That was the month Richmond, the Confederate capital, was evacuated and burned; the month the major Southern armies surrendered, the month President Lincoln was assassinated, and the month the task of reuniting the riven country fell to a new president, Andrew Johnson.

A pretty big news month, you could say, and Winik's *April 1865* captures it in such detail and with so much context as to seem, at times, like an overbuilt house. Even so, Winik's command of the war makes the book compelling: an engrossing narrative history, a valuable refresher on how the war ended.

Yet Winik's book is more than that. The passage of time—and we are now 136 years from April 1865—tends to confer on big events like the end of the Civil War a kind of inevitability, as though they could not have turned out any way other than they did. By making clear the contingencies of a momentous chapter in our history, Winik's book teaches the uncertainties of history. Consider, for example, the fate of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Unable to defend Richmond any longer, Lee decided to retreat forty miles west to Amelia Court House, where his hungry troops would eat, before turning south to Danville and then into North Carolina where he would meet up with Joe Johnston and his army, and open a new phase of the war. Lee's plan turned on the delivery by train of 350,000 rations at Amelia Court House. But upon arrival there he found the boxcars loaded not with food but ammunition.

"Wars," Winik writes, "can turn on such seemingly minor things" as the "mere administrative mix-up" that Lee clearly understood "threatened to do him in." We know, of course, what happened: Lee's ravenous, weakening army got only as far as Appomattox Court House, where Lee surrendered. But Winik pauses in his account of these

April 1865
The Month That Saved America
by Jay Winik
HarperCollins, 496 pp., $32.50

Terry Eastland's most recent book is Freedom of Expression in the Supreme Court: The Defining Cases *(Rowman & Littlefield).*

events to think about those ammunition-filled boxcars: "What if Lee had found an abundance of food at Amelia Court House—and safely made his way south to link up with Joe Johnston?"

Likewise, Winik has a keen eye for the choices men on both sides made. He breaks down events to make clear the paths not taken. A choice available to Lee, one urged by the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, was to head west to the mountains and organize a guerrilla resistance throughout the South, which could have persisted for years. Imagine, as Winik does, the Union trying to occupy the entire Confederacy: America in time might have "come to resemble a Swiss cheese, with Union cities here, pockets of Confederate resistance lurking there, ambiguous areas of no-man's-land in between."

Winik's emphasis on such contingencies is essential to the book's central argument that April 1865 was the month that saved America. Most civil wars end badly, begetting a "vicious circle of more civil war and more violence, death, and instability." It was not inevitable that our Civil War should end as it did, or that it would end at all well. "What emerges from the panorama of April 1865 is that the whole of our national history could have been altered but for a few decisions, a quirk of fate, a sudden shift of luck."

The bad ending was avoided, however, not so much by fate or luck, as by a "few decisions" made by Union as well as Confederate leaders. Northern generals—Grant and Sherman notably—showed magnanimity toward the defeated Confederate soldiers, and Southern generals, with Lee leading the way, showed good judgment in laying down their arms.

The America thus saved was able to become a single nation after its civil war. Winik reminds us that though a central government was established by the Constitution, the country was not really a nation before the Civil War. Indeed, words like "nation" and "national" were rarely used in political discourse, as Americans were more attached to states and even regions. Sectional tensions broke out early: There was the Whiskey

Rebellion in 1794, and New England states opposed to the War of 1812 actually were the first to flirt with secession. Slavery proved the issue that cracked the underpinnings of the fragile union. The Civil War settled the issue of whether a state may secede, and, in doing so, established a "nation" (a word Lincoln used no fewer than five times in the Gettysburg Address). Tellingly, as Winik points out, there was a shift in usage, by the war's end, from saying "the United States are" to saying "the United States is…."

April 1865 contains a series of vivid sketches of those who figured in the big stories of the month: Grant and Lee, of course, but also such generals as Sherman, Johnston, and Nathan Bedford Forrest; the two presidents, Davis and Lincoln, and even Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, the most famous actor of the time. The portrait of Lee is an admiring one, and Winik is insightful about Lincoln.

Winik credits Lincoln's greatness, but he observes that Lincoln was "ill-prepared for his job," his resume thin and his moods often dark. Still, on the decisive issue of his time—the very future of the country—no one was more dedicated than Lincoln to keeping it together. Winik uses religion to explain Lincoln's "dogged tenacity" in behalf of union. Deeply moved by faith as the war progressed, Lincoln began to see himself as "an instrument of providence," satisfied that "when the Almighty wants me to do or not do a particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know it." Winik comments: "Amid the scourge of conflict, this provided some of the lubricant of presidential leadership." Books on presidential leadership today are many, but few dare speak openly of a leadership importantly lubricated by faith.

Winik doesn't pursue the matter of providence further. Yet his book provokes reflection on this point. In stating that a month saved America, Winik obviously means that America was saved during that particular month, not that the month was the agent of the saving. But to recognize that America was saved invites the question of the purposes for which it might have been saved. The twentieth century suggests part of the answer, for the United States was there—was it not?—to counter the evils of fascism and communism.

There have been innumerable books about the Civil War, many of which have led to films. It's not hard to imagine *April 1865* coming to a movie theater near you. But I would recommend you read the book first. ♦

Orange County Confidential

The birth of conservatism out of the spirit of California.

BY GREGORY L. SCHNEIDER

In her examination of grass-roots conservatism in Orange County, California, Lisa McGirr ponders how a bunch of—well, she would say extremists—happened to take over a political party. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* is an imaginative study of the faces in the crowd who made up the Goldwater boom.

While conservatives often look back triumphantly on their political successes over the last three decades, this work captures the politically charged yet modest middle-class culture that gave life to the conservative movement.

Suburban Warriors
The Origins of the New American Right
by Lisa McGirr
Princeton, 416 pp., $29.95

Why was Orange County such a hotbed for the so-called Radical Right? As McGirr argues, the region's combination of defense contractors, military bases, evangelical religion, and new suburban developments made its residents uniquely receptive to the conservative movement. Many residents were migrant midwesterners who had arrived during the Depression and had brought along their evangelical faiths and homespun values. World War II and the defense industry boom of the Cold War years, particularly during the Korean War, led to a huge population increase in Orange County. Dependent on the military-industrial complex for their livelihood, Orange County folks naturally gravitated to conservatism's patriotic and anti-Communist principles.

Anti-communism also took root among the landowners and agricultural interests that dominated Orange County's rich farmland, much of which was becoming suburbia. This mix of landed conservatism and nouveau middle-class migrants made a powerful brew.

Every movement needs a spark and for Orange County, it came in 1960 when Joel Dvorman, a school board trustee, held at his house a meeting of the ACLU to propose ending California's anti-Communist investigating committees. Dvorman invited Frank Wilkinson, an anti-HUAC activist who was widely believed to be a party member, to speak at the meeting. Locals protested someone with "Communist ideas" speaking in their neighborhood. They wrote letters to the conservative *Orange County Register*, established a ladies' auxiliary, held meetings, and signed petitions. Within months, Orange County was hosting rallies for Fred Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communist Crusade and establishing one of the largest chapters of the John Birch Society in the country (eventually county residents had to set up multiple chapters of the society).

Such grass-roots activity became the foundation for political organization well beyond the local level. Orange County both reflected and helped spawn the national conservative movement of the early 1960s:

> Bridge clubs, coffee klatches, and barbecues—all popular in the new suburban communities—provided some of the opportunity for right-wing ideas to spread literally from home to home.

Women played particularly important roles in hosting meetings and coffees, though rarely did they become leaders of political organizations. Nonetheless, neighborly get-togethers reinforced ideas individuals may have gleaned from magazines like *National Review* and *Human Events*. Indeed, conservative magazines and books were pivotal in providing arguments, sparking discussion, and inspiring activists to defend against a Communist menace and, later, to fight the culture wars.

In Orange County, businessmen were also key players in the conservative movement. After perfecting the boysenberry, Walter Knott and his wife sold berry pies and chicken dinners out of their roadside stand. The business grew into a restaurant empire. Knott and others donated money to conservative causes and funded their own advocacy groups, like the Free Enterprise Association. Evangelical ministers also thrived in Orange County—McGirr reminds us of the prominence of evangelical and fundamentalist sects in California history—preaching about the evils of communism and the virtues of the free market. In turn, some of these preachers gave the free market gospel a particularly Californian flavor, like Robert Schuller (of Crystal Cathedral fame) with his drive-in church.

Orange County was one of the few places to give Barry Goldwater overwhelming majorities. In 1966, county voters supported Ronald Reagan for governor. During the late 1960s residents fought against growing threats to law and order as conservatism moved to embrace social issues. The new permissiveness among young people, the rise of student radicalism, and urban rioting alarmed these middle-class suburbanites. They grew amenable to populist appeals like those of Reagan, Los Angeles mayoral candidate Sam Yorty, and George Wallace. And over time, the extremists who had joined the John Birch Society and supported the Goldwater campaign became respectable, and attractive, voters at the

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center of a new majority. Nixon won their support in 1968 running on law and order, and his aide Kevin Phillips would have Orange County residents in mind when he described a "new Republican majority."

As McGirr understands, ideology does not mean inflexibility. And so it is no surprise that conservatism in the late 1960s should reflect a wide range of increasingly mainstream concerns. Anti-Communists like former congressman James B. Utt, who worried that the United Nations was training "barefooted Africans" in Georgia to take over the United States, no longer exemplified the movement. The same is true of John Birch Society founder Robert Welch, who had convinced many Orange County residents that there were actual Communists in their midst. By the end of the Goldwater campaign, Bircher membership had declined in the county and many activists shifted to a more respectable conservatism, one defensive of tradition and property rights. Some moved in a more libertarian direction, recognizing the threat the state poses to businesses and personal freedoms. Others embraced, as McGirr makes clear, single-issue campaigns over things like abortion, sex education, obscenity, feminism, and gay rights.

In focusing on conservative identity, on conservatism's ability to shift positions while still defending some form of tradition, McGirr has provided an elegantly written analysis of the Right which will reshape historical understandings of the conservative movement for some time to come. ♦

A World Without Class

Bridget Jones's Britain.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

After spending the 1980s wallowing in unremunerative pomposity, English filmmakers changed their ways, building a successful if schizophrenic commercial industry out of two kinds of formulaic blockbuster. On the upmarket end were literary adaptations, of which the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) was the masterpiece. On the downmarket end were films of truly towering idiocy, of shallowness pushed so far it attained a kind of grandeur—movies that carried insipidity where the cheapest Hollywood hucksters feared to tread. *The Full Monty* and *Brassed Off* take the laurels here, films so moronic that only the English could have made them.

And now we have *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Helen Fielding's bestselling book chronicled a publishing yuppie turning thirty-three, who seeks to lose weight, quit smoking, and (thereby) win herself a man. The film, directed by Fielding's friend Sharon Maguire, is the first attempt to marry the Jane Austen remake to the English dumbo film. The plot follows *Pride and Prejudice* rather faithfully. Hugh Grant, as Bridget's goatish boss Daniel Cleaver, stands in for Jane Austen's dashing reprobate Wickham; the rough-hewn-but-loaded Darcy type is the human-rights lawyer Mark Darcy (geddit?), played by Colin Firth (who played the real Darcy in the BBC *Pride and Prejudice*). *Bridget Jones's Diary* had the biggest-grossing opening weekend in British movie history.

But this is a film of even larger significance than its box-office take can convey: *Bridget Jones's Diary* is the first movie that will cause men to recoil with the same kind of horror feminists have claimed to feel watching the sexist cinema of yore. Some critics have seen in Bridget's craving for love and matrimony a repudiation of feminism.

Nothing could be more wrong. *Bridget Jones's Diary* is laying claim to a woman's right to the chief *male* right from the golden days of patriarchy: the right to be inarticulate, slovenly, lazy, drunken, disingenuous, unkind, and unimpressive—and still bag an obedient, even groveling, mate. Bridget's cultural next-of-kin are not Jane Austen's heroines but Dawn Powell's adulterous husbands, who believe they have the right to betray everyone in the service of their hedonism because . . . well, because they're them. If this movie were called, say, *Bart Jones's Diary*, it would be considered the most misogynistic film of our day.

Of course, sympathetic viewers claim to see past Bridget's flaws to a core of integrity. One critic writes, "Everything she thinks and says is informed by a critical, clear-eyed intelligence, even if she botches the actual words." Another marvels that, despite her dowdiness, Bridget "nevertheless manages to win, convincingly, the hearts of two breathtakingly attractive men."

Clearly they're thinking not of Bridget but of the fetching Renée Zellweger who plays her—and who has made her name playing put-upon women with an inner glow. Zellweger dropped her American accent and added a reported twenty pounds (more like forty, by the looks of it) for the part. But she is still recognizably herself, and she quickly dropped the weight after shooting. (Lest there be any confusion on that score, she posed in a series of slinky, clavicle-exposing gowns for *Vogue*.)

But Zellweger's presence doesn't make Bridget Jones a shrinking violet any more than John Wayne's makes *The Quiet Man* a Western. Bridget is more treader upon than trodden upon. She's snobbish (she pretends to have read F.R. Leavis). She's disloyal (despite every evidence of Darcy's devotion, she's ready to drop him when the caddish Cleaver makes a drunken call). She is, above all, a plaything of her appetites. Bad character would be an improvement, might give her a bit of "Blues in the Night" sex appeal. But she has no character at all.

Certain female viewers react to Bridget Jones with that combination of self-

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aggrandizement and self-pity that is a tell-tale of chauvinism. According to director Maguire, "People would come up to Helen all the time and say, 'I've read your *Bridget Jones* pieces and that is me; that is my life.'" The reaction of male viewers will be dumb incomprehension at Darcy's and (to a lesser extent) Cleaver's willingness to prostrate themselves. When Cleaver comes back to Bridget, staggering up the stairs to interrupt her birthday party, you think: *Turn around! Go back to that American babe you were dating!* When Darcy appears to be contemplating marriage, you want to shout: *Don't do it, man! Eight months with her, and you'll need a human rights lawyer!*

Pride and Prejudice, needless to say, leaves other feelings. The reader roots for the lovers and rages against the class system that keeps them apart. The English and Americans have always seen different things in Jane Austen's books, and it's likely that difference was carried over to their screen adaptations. English viewers recognized that Darcy had a hundred good reasons to forget about Elizabeth Bennet, and that it took mighty resources of intelligence and compatibility to steel them to flout class rules. Americans wouldn't recognize a class narrative if it punched them in the nose, and so view Austen's conflict as the more pedestrian one of overcoming generic "inhibitions"—as *Footloose* or *Sister Act* in period dress. Each culture sees the movie it wants to see.

Class is altogether absent in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, except for Bridget's unnecessary mortification when her mother winds up dating a shopping-channel salesman. And this absence is evidence that the American reading of Jane Austen—*Live a little! Don't be so stuck up!*—is drowning out the older, more English reading in England as well. Certainly, this movie's moral compass is that everything will come right in the end if you just loosen up. That's why two hours in a theater with Bridget Jones can leave one with bilious and unwelcome thoughts—such as that, while *Pride and Prejudice* is about a world that has a class system and shouldn't, *Bridget Jones's Diary* is about a world that doesn't have one and should. ♦

Northern Rights

Canada embraces the rights revolution.

BY MICHAEL ALEXANDER

When Norm Macdonald hosted the news segment on *Saturday Night Live*, he delighted in reporting that "Germans still love David Hasselhoff." In a similar vein, I am compelled to report that Canadians still love Michael Ignatieff. His new book, *The Rights Revolution*, has become a bestseller in Canada, the subject of several well-publicized national radio broadcasts, and the recipient of glowing praise from media and academic elites. The main reason Canadians love Ignatieff's book is the same reason many Americans will hate it: It is a blistering attack on the American tradition of protecting individual rights.

The Rights Revolution
by Michael Ignatieff
Anansi, 184 pp., $16.95

Currently a lecturer at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Michael Ignatieff takes as his subject the "rights-claims" that have been made by minority groups around the world during the last forty years. An ardent defender of minority interests, Ignatieff argues for the need to grant new rights and privileges to women, aboriginal peoples, ethnic groups, and gay men and women. This makes the book a timely read, for the new democracies of Eastern Europe and the mature democracies of Western Europe and North America are all facing the challenge of reconciling the demand for group rights with the guarantee of individual rights.

The (small "l") liberal solution to this problem is simple enough: unalienable rights, such as freedom of speech and equality before the law, must prevail in any conflict with group rights. Ignatieff, however, argues for the acceptance of otherwise forbidden group rights based on the need to correct historical injustices and the inherent need of groups to be publicly recognized by means of special entitlements and constitutional guarantees. To this end, he recommends, among other things, affirmative action programs on a vast scale, pay equity laws, the devolution of sovereignty to aboriginal groups, multicultural education, more trade unions in the workplace, and welfare entitlements such as universal day care and expanded accident and unemployment insurance. He can also live with high taxation. Many of these measures have already been implemented in Canada, and so Ignatieff chooses Canada over America as a model for the just society. (Did I mention that Canadians love Michael Ignatieff?)

The book's attack on American justice is rooted in the desire for recognition. The analysis begins with a critique of the liberal view of civil society as a collection of identically free individuals, all equally enjoying the same fundamental rights and privileges. This vision—expounded by the American Framers—is inadequate because it provides a partial and limited view of what it means to be a human being. Ultimately, it leads to assimilation to the norms of the "white, heterosexual, family-oriented, native-born" majority, and so it fails to deal with the other essential source of our humanity: the commitments that define us as members of groups. These commitments are essential because they are the primary source of individual identity.

According to Ignatieff, no one really feels that he is an equal until the state

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publicly values his "culture, heritage and distinctive point of view" by extending rights or entitlements to his group. Only when the state honors everyone in this way does each person enjoy what Ignatieff refers to as the right to "equal moral consideration."

So, Ignatieff believes that any conflict between group rights and individual rights can be resolved when the purpose of granting group rights is to recognize the identity of minority citizens. In this respect, Canada emerges as a great success and America a failure. Yet Canada looks successful only because Ignatieff ignores the implications of Canadian policies, and America seems to be a failure only because he almost willfully misunderstands American liberalism.

In the case of Canada, for example, when examining government affirmative action programs, Ignatieff fails to deal with the objection that they lead to reverse discrimination; when dealing with the question of whether self-governing aboriginal groups can deny women the right to vote or hold office, he urges the parties to engage in intercultural negotiation, the equivalent of asking, Can't we all just get along? Throughout, Ignatieff can argue for Canada as a model because he ignores the conflict between groups and individuals. Similarly, America's ability to reconcile individuals and groups is underrated because he does not fully articulate what the Framers had to say about the ends of government.

Ignatieff is right in asserting that a liberal society does tend to mitigate differences between groups. In pre-liberal societies, people engaged in endless disputes over whose religion or culture deserved preeminence. Those disputes produced nothing but war and poverty. By focusing society on the pursuit of gain, and assigning religion and culture to the private domain, where they would become matters of individual choice, the Framers hoped to diminish religious and cultural ties in some measure and keep them out of the public domain. The Framers would never have accepted Ignatieff's politics of recognition, fearing they would reinvigorate group differences at the expense of peace and individual rights. And that, of course, is what those politics have done in Canada and elsewhere.

But the liberal solution also cuts in a completely different direction. For Ignatieff, America forgets the importance of recognizing minority groups because his American model is an incomplete articulation of the liberal view of government. Citizens lack identity in this model because it views them from only one perspective, that of the state. From the government's standpoint, group identity is a non-issue because everyone deserves to have his rights protected regardless of his aims, beliefs, or affiliations. But the point of protecting these rights, when seen from the standpoint of the citizen, is to provide an expansive private domain where the real richness of human life can be experienced, where everyone has the freedom to pursue happiness—regardless of how it is understood.

Ignatieff stacks the deck against a liberal regime of individual rights by assuming that it necessarily leads to assimilation, when in fact it is the essential precondition to the protection of individual and group differences, and thus genuine diversity.

Perhaps the greatest problem with *The Rights Revolution* is that it fails to address how the demand for equal approval can block individual development. This demand prevents us from questioning different commitments and beliefs. We cannot ask, for example, whether a life devoted to cross-dressing deserves the same approval as one devoted to eradicating injustice. But can we really believe that RuPaul is the moral equal of Martin Luther King?

In a world where equal approval is required, we cannot ask that question for fear of offending RuPaul, his fans, or any citizen who believes in the right to equal approval. What this means is that we no longer have the freedom to discuss what it means to lead a good life, an inquiry that requires us to ask whether some ways of life are better than others.

Properly understood, the author's identity politics lead to wholesale political correctness and the end of liberal democracy's greatest claim to fame, freedom of thought. This should give modern liberals like Ignatieff cause to wonder, for, as one notable gay political thinker said, the unexamined life is not worth living. ♦

BCA

Mel Brooks Produces

It's Springtime for Hitler on Broadway.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Since it opened its doors in 1927, the ornate St. James Theater has been the premier venue for musicals on Broadway. Opening in 1943, *Oklahoma!* was performed 2,213 times on its boards, and seven years later Rodgers and Hammerstein presented *The King and I* there. *Where's Charley?* and *The Pajama Game* debuted at the St. James, and for several years it played host to *Hello, Dolly!* More recently, the St. James was home to the theatrical version of The Who's *Tommy*, the best of the rock operas. But never in the theater's seventy-four-year history has laughter—raucous, screaming, uncontrollable laughter—erupted from the 1,710 people sitting in the St. James quite the way it is right now.

The source of the laughter is a new musical called *The Producers*. There's no sense trying to maintain critical distance: *The Producers* may well be the funniest show that has ever appeared on a Broadway stage. Perhaps when the Marx Brothers exploded into stardom in 1924 with *I'll Say She Is*, theatergoers were convulsed to the point of pain in

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the same way. But that show was a revue, not a full-fledged musical comedy that lasts almost three hours and doesn't let go of you. From its opening to its closing curtain call, *The Producers* envelops its audience in an insane glee that never, ever dissipates. The show runs ten minutes longer than it needs to simply because the actors have to remain silently in place on at least twenty occasions until the guffaws subside. Even so, you wish there were more.

There's no prevailing theory of the theater that can adequately explain this triumph. Indeed, *The Producers* thrives by breaking all of Broadway's rules. The first rule of musicals states: The first act is always better than the second, which loses momentum until the appearance of a rousing "11:00 Number" that brings the show back to life just before the curtain. Not here; *The Producers* is the only musical I've seen whose second act is better, stronger, and funnier than its first.

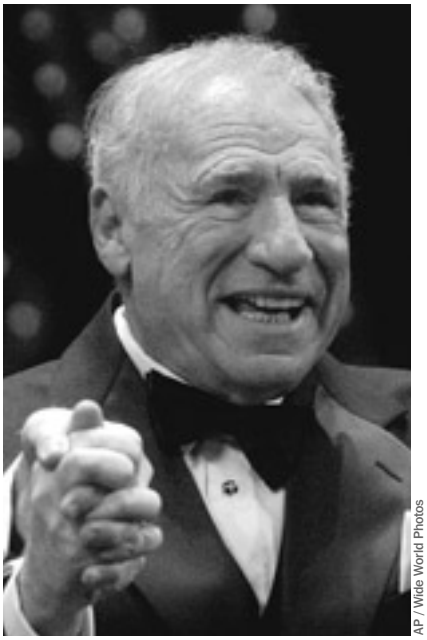
Broadway's second rule holds that a great musical must have a great musical score. *The Producers* has a charming but unmemorable score (save for a single song first performed thirty-three years ago), and it doesn't matter a whit.

The third rule states: If a show's production costs rise above $10 million, it's sure to be overproduced in the manner of Andrew Lloyd Webber's monstrosities and therefore charmless. *The Producers* cost $11 million, yet it's as light as a feather and as fleet-footed as Mercury.

The fourth rule asserts that musicals derived from movies don't work. There are two exceptions to this rule, *Carnival* (based on *Lili*) and *The Lion King*. But while both have their charms, they can't hold a candle to *The Producers*, which does something no one would ever have thought possible: It takes an extraordinary film and turns it into an even more extraordinary piece of theater.

Last year, after polling fifteen hundred movie-industry people, the American Film Institute issued a list of the hundred best American comedies. The movie version of *The Producers* was eleventh, and many would rank it higher.

It was the first full-length feature written and directed by Mel Brooks, a crazed farce about a misbegotten Broadway impresario. "I was Max Bialystock, king of Broadway," the lead character laments at the beginning. "Six shows running at once. Look at me now—look at me now! I'm wearing a cardboard belt!" He is reduced to keeping the wolves at bay by bilking old ladies out of their retirement checks in exchange for a little sex play. A meek accountant named Leo Bloom comes to do Bialystock's taxes and offhandedly observes that a producer could make more money from a flop than a hit as long as the show closed on opening night—because he could raise far more money than it cost and nobody would check the books afterwards.



AP / Wide World Photos

If there's anything Bialystock knows, it's how to stage a flop. He and Bloom go into business in search of the worst show ever written and find a musical called "Springtime for Hitler." They engage an outrageously swishy and tasteless director-choreographer, hire an aged flower child to play Adolf, and wait happily for disaster to strike. The movie is a treasure trove of one-liners and outrageous comic performances. Max looks out the window of his office and sees a Rolls-Royce on the street: "That's right, baby," he shouts. "When you've got it, flaunt it!" The late Zero Mostel, who played Bialystock, was a force of nature, and he is positively elemental as the vain, leering, chiseling, eye-bulging, and oddly pathetic Max. "Shut up!" he bellows at one point, "I'm having a rhetorical conversation!"

Leo Bloom is prone to demented panic attacks. "I'm hysterical!" he screams, and when Bialystock throws a cup of water in his face, he replies: "I'm wet! I'm wet! I'm hysterical and I'm wet!" Gene Wilder's tantrums are so indescribably wild they won him an Oscar nomination. The author of "Springtime for Hitler," Franz Liebkind ("child lover" in German), wears a combat helmet and lederhosen as he rants: "Churchill! With his cigars, with his brandy, and his rotten painting! Rotten! Hitler, there was a painter. He could paint an entire apartment in one afternoon—two coats!" Kenneth Mars's vaudeville turn has inspired a million imitators, none as good. The movie's most famous sequence may be the opening number from "Springtime for Hitler," complete with machine-gun fire and dancing stormtroopers who form a swastika à la Busby Berkeley—an orgy of intentionally bad taste the likes of which the cinema had never seen before. "We're marching to a faster pace," the dancers sing. "Look out, here comes the master race!"

How could a stage version possibly compete with all of this? When word of a Broadway production first surfaced two years ago, it wasn't exactly reassuring to learn that Mel Brooks was writing its libretto, lyrics, and score. Brooks may be one of the funniest men ever to walk the earth, but there hasn't been a memorable moment in a Brooks movie since 1981, when he turned the Spanish Inquisition into a "Springtime for Hitler"-like production number in *History of the World, Part I*. His previous outings on Broadway, nearly four decades ago, were as the author of the librettos for two unsuccessful musicals. And he's not exactly a composer (though he was nominated for an Oscar in 1974 for the title song of *Blazing Saddles*). Brooks "writes" music by humming into a tape recorder and having his melody transcribed and orchestrated by others. And there's the stark fact that

Opposite: Mel Brooks on Broadway. Above: The new stage production of The Producers.

Brooks is almost seventy-five years old. Musicals tend to be a young man's game; no one over sixty has ever written a good one.

Until now. Brooks's score (which is really a collaboration with Glen Kelly, who is credited with "musical arrangements and supervision") is bright, breezy, and tuneful in a distinctly old-fashioned way. There isn't a hint here of contemporary pop, rock, or the portentous dissonances to which Stephen Sondheim, for example, is addicted (though the only tune that remains lodged in your head afterward is still "Springtime for Hitler"). And his lyrics are wondrous and raunchy, a quality that also suffused the words of Cole Porter and Lorenz Hart in their day.

Bialystock sings of the female seniors from whom he will wrest money for his flop: "It's time for Max / To put his backers on their backs, / And thrill them with amazing acts, / Those aging nymphomaniacs." For his part, Leo Bloom fears sex: "The urge to merge can rob us of our senses. / The need to breed can make a man a drone. / We must be on alert with our defenses, / For every skirt will test testosterone."

The show's most startling number is a new song trilled by the fey director hired by Max and Leo. "No matter what you do on the stage," sings the fey director, "Keep it light, keep it bright, keep it gay! / Whether it's murder, mayhem or rage, / Don't complain, it's a pain, keep it gay!" He envisions "German soldiers dancing through France, / Played by chorus boys in very tight pants."

Though the director and his "common-law assistant" appear in the movie, Brooks didn't have to retain them for the play; he has changed the plot substantially with the wise deletion of the dated hippie character who wins the role of Hitler. Still, the quality that most distinguished *The Producers* in 1968 was its no-holds-barred gallows humor, and there's nothing shocking these days about dancing Nazis or sexually voracious senior citizens. But there is something shocking about making fun of Broadway's obsession with homosexuality, and that's the subtext of "Keep It Gay." The director's starring performance as a screaming-queen Hitler in the show-within-a-show are the jalapeños hiding in this crazy salad.

This show is the crowning achievement of Brooks's career, and there's something wistful and instructive about the cause of that achievement. For while *The Producers* bills itself as "the new Mel Brooks musical," the fact is that for the first time since his "2,000-Year-Old Man" recordings with Carl Reiner, Brooks has worked in true collaboration with a talent comparable to his own. The show's director and choreographer is Susan Stroman, and credit for the triumph of *The Producers* belongs equally to her.

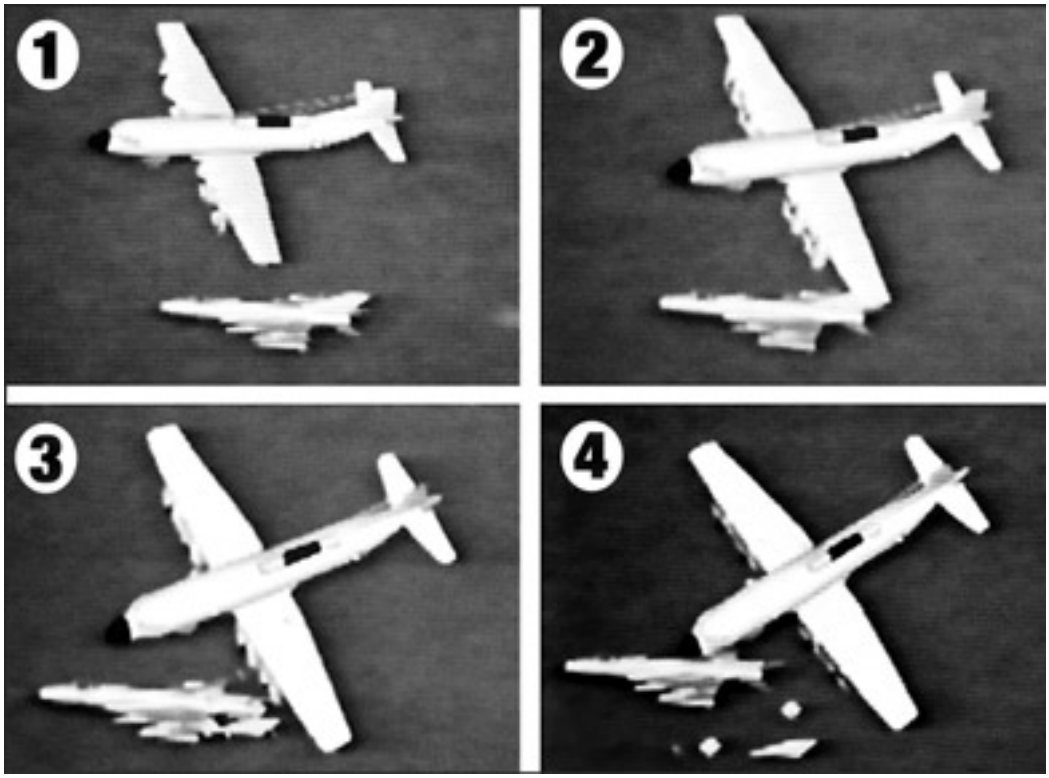
Have you ever seen choreography that made you dissolve into hysterics? The unimaginably inventive Stroman comes up with a routine in which Max's little old ladies do a tap number—except that it's their walkers that do the dancing. She manages to match the brilliance of the movie's "Springtime for Hitler" by turning the goose-stepping chorus line into a parody of *A Chorus Line*, the longest-running Broadway show in history. The dancers appear in front of a mirror on an otherwise black stage, and then twist around while the mirror rises at an angle—and yes, Stroman has succeeded in recreating the movie's can-you-top-this image of the Nazis dancing in swastika formation.

There are others to praise, especially Nathan Lane, whose turn as Max Bialystock will become a part of Broadway legend in the manner of Ethel Merman's Mama Rose in *Gypsy*. (Matthew Broderick, who plays Leo, cannot quite reach the soaring heights of Gene Wilder's flight of comic fancy.) But while Brooks is at the end of his career, Stroman is only now taking off. This is her third Broadway production as director and choreographer in two years, and it confirms her standing as the most vital behind-the-scenes force in the American theater since the death of *A Chorus Line*'s Michael Bennett.

Brooks himself has said of Stroman, "Instead of the normal Mel Brooks, who is rather vulgar, burlesquey, vaudeville, harsh, cheap, she classed me up. . . . She sees the whole show. She knows where all the parts fit." Her success in working with Brooks makes us long for what was lost when he became a superstar movie director and producer in the 1970s. Truth to tell, he has never been even remotely competent at the mechanics of film. His movies are garish and ham-handed, the scripts (usually written by a committee of gagmen) a mishmash of lame jokes with an occasional spike of frenzied inspiration.

It's almost painful to imagine what glories might have been created if Brooks had spent his years in the movies working with a director and strong writers who could have brought discipline and focus, as Stroman has, to his improvisatory genius. After "Springtime for Hitler" turns out to be a smash, the suffering Max Bialystock moans, "Where did I go right?" At this sweet moment, Mel Brooks has reason to ask himself the same question. ♦

The Chinese foreign ministry released a video "re-creation" depicting its version of the collision of the Chinese fighter jet and the U.S. reconnaissance plane. ***—News item***



Chinese Foreign Ministry

1. U.S. warplane "*Imperialist Death*" passes peaceful Chinese airship "*Generosity*" at speed of 9,000 m.p.h.

2. "*Imperialist Death*" backs up to execute Hazardous Wing-slap Maneuver, damaging tail of "*Generosity.*"

3. "*Imperialist Death*" persists in Hazardous Wing-slap Maneuver and moves into position for Hazardous Nose Cone Pock.

4. "*Imperialist Death*" executes Hazardous Nose Cone Pock, hammering pock! pock! pock! on back of tragically doomed "*Generosity*." American pilots (visible at left in black-painted balsa-wood thingy glued on to resemble cockpit) shout, "Die, loving father, philanthropist beloved of ancestral village, and model citizen, die! In the name of the untrammeled free market and exploitative work conditions, die!"